# THEOSOPHY AND NEW THOUGHT

HENRY C SHELDON

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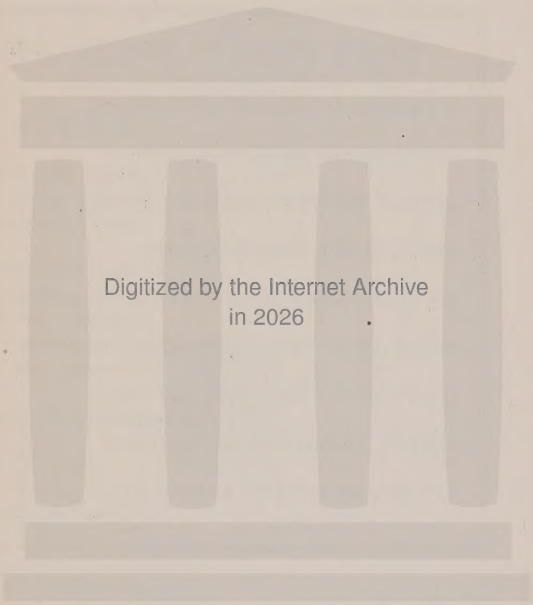
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# THEOSOPHY AND NEW THOUGHT

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# PREFACE

THE double title given to the book is not meant to imply that Theosophy and New Thought are approximately identical. The inclusion of the two in a single volume is rather a matter of convenience than of logical classification. We recognize that, while they have distinct points of similarity, they also exhibit quite apparent contrasts in spirit and content. In particular the intemperate speculation and headlong Orientalism of Theosophy are but partially reflected in New Thought. Both, however, make very high claims, and this fact justifies the subjecting of them to close scrutiny.

# PART I

# THEOSOPHY

# CHAPTER I

## HISTORICAL OUTLINES

THE type of Theosophy which is here examined is of very recent date. Whatever may be the age of some of its ingredients, it first began to be compounded in 1875. In the fall of that year the Theosophical Society was started in New York city. The most efficient agent in its origination was a Russian woman whose maiden name was Helena Petrovna Hahn, but who—from the name of N. B. Blavatsky, her first and only legal husband whom she left after a three months' trial—is known as Madame Blavatsky. Closely associated with her, and her constant coadjutor till her death, was H. S. Olcott, commonly mentioned by the title of Colonel, which he gained in the Civil War. W. Q. Judge, who,

after Olcott, became one of the most conspicuous among American representatives of Theosophy, was also connected with the Society from the first.

The earlier life of Madame Blavatsky lies partly in the mist. The ascertained facts are that she was married in 1848, at the age of seventeen; that after deserting her husband she led a wandering life for twenty-five years, being found at intervals in Paris, London, Russia, Greece, Egypt, the United States, Mexico, and India. For at least a considerable part of this period she was interested in occultism, and it is probable that in her Eastern travels she came into sufficient contact with professional magicians to learn somewhat of their art. From the testimony of members of her own family it is known that even in childhood she was characterized by peculiar psychic gifts, or abilities to figure as a "medium," and there is clear evidence that as early as 1858 she

became distinctly affiliated with Spiritualism.[1] Thirteen years later (1871) she attempted to found "a sort of spiritual society at Cairo, upon a basis of phenomena." This proved to be a "lamentable fiasco,"[2] but her interest in Spiritualism was not dampened by the miserable outcome, and on her arrival at New York in 1873 she sought cooperation with the mediums whose reputed marvels at that time were attracting much attention. The connection was brief, since exposure of fraudulent proceedings greatly abridged public interest in spiritualistic performances. It was thought best to try a new scheme. And so resort was made to Theosophy as being at once less exposed to hostile judgment, and furnishing abundant means for gratifying an appetite for occultism. The result was the founding of the Theosophical Society. As was ob-

[1] Letter of Madame Blavatsky cited by Olcott in The Theosophist, August, 1892.

[2] Olcott, Old Diary Leaves, pp. 22, 23.

served, this took place in the fall of 1875.

For the next two years Madame Blavatsky's energies were mainly devoted to the writing of the first notable manifesto of modern Theosophy, the work in two ponderous volumes entitled Isis Unveiled. Near the close of 1878 she went with Olcott to India. Here an appreciable success was won. The attempt to amalgamate the Theosophical Society with the Arya Samaj miscarried, it is true, but the flattering tributes paid to Hindu philosophy and religion, aided by the impression made by the reputed marvels, especially at the headquarters in Adyar, secured the adhesion of a considerable number of the natives, as also of several European residents. A check to propagandism occurred in 1884–85 by reason of the publication, first in the Madras Christian College Magazine and then in the Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, of evi-

dences of fraud in the alleged marvels at Adyar. The evidences were overwhelming; but the Theosophical leaders met them with denials and continued to labor energetically for their scheme. Madame Blavatsky began, under the title of "The Secret Doctrine," the work which largely occupied her later years, and which is commonly ranked as the *magnum opus* of modern Theosophy. It is her most elaborate contribution to the literature of her school, though in point of serviceable introduction to her matured theories her Key to Theosophy might be given precedence.

The death of Madame Blavatsky occurred in 1891. An estimate of her character will hardly be avoidable when we come to consider the grounds of authority claimed for the Theosophical system. In the present connection it will suffice to repeat the characterization given by one who was continuously in her company for the larger part of her career as a Theos-

ophist, and who claimed to have revised, as to form, nearly every page of her English writings. "If there ever existed a person in history," writes Olcott, "who was a greater conglomeration of good and bad, light and shadow, wisdom and indiscretion, spiritual insight and lack of common sense, I cannot recall the name, the circumstances, or the epoch."[3]

At the time when the exposure made by the report of the Society for Psychical Research cast a cloud over the prospects of the Theosophical movement, it won in the person of Mrs. Annie Besant an adherent whose gift as public speaker and as writer was to serve as an important asset. Some years earlier this woman had left home, husband, and infant, joined the Free Thought Society in London, and become an intense advocate of an atheistic and socialistic platform. By an apparently sudden turn she ex-

[3] Olcott, Old Diary Leaves, Foreword, p. vii.

changed her rank skepticism for the complex affirmations of Theosophy.

Shortly after the death of Madame Blavatsky a schism occurred in the Theosophical Society. Up to that time Olcott had served as president and W. Q. Judge as vice-president. The conviction now entered the mind of Judge that the first place was due to him. Accordingly, he went diligently to work, resorting among other expedients to letters in his interest which purported to come from the Mahatmas who were supposed to use the Society as the chosen mouthpiece of their superior wisdom. Olcott was sufficiently overawed to resign. But he was in possession of very cogent evidence that Judge himself was the author of the Mahatma letters which favored his promotion. In the issue he withdrew his resignation and found opportunity to convince Mrs. Besant that Judge had played false. However, an attempt was made to

avoid scandal and to hush up the matter. This was not wholly successful, and the result was that Judge broke away from the party of Olcott and Besant, taking with him a majority of the American Theosophists. After his death in 1896 Mrs. Katherine Tingley was invested with the presidency of the American branch, with Point Loma, California, as the headquarters. On the death of Olcott in 1907 Mrs. Besant took his place as president. The schism remained unhealed, and goes to show that the treasure of Theosophy was committed to earthen vessels. That the members of the Society were quite accessible to mundane motives and tempers was proved at an earlier point; for Madame Blavatsky in her day admitted that there was as much backbiting, slandering, and quarreling in the Theosophical Society, as in the Christian churches, let alone scientific societies.[4]

[4] Key to Theosophy, pp. 250–252.

Among those who supported the Theosophical movement in India a prominent place was taken by A. P. Sinnett, and his writings make a considerable factor in the literature of the movement. A later contributor to that literature is C. W. Leadbeater, in recent years closely associated with Mrs. Besant at the headquarters in Madras, though for a period (1905–1909) he was constrained to disconnect himself from the Society on the score of the charge of disseminating immoral teaching among boys. A defense of this teaching by an American Theosophist, Van Hoek, was sharply challenged in England. On the refusal of the General Council to withdraw this document "a body of seven hundred British Theosophists, including nearly all the cultured and influential members in the country, and a number in other lands, left the Society."[5]

[5] J. N. Farquhar, Modern Religious Movements in India, pp. 273, 274.

## CHAPTER II

## APPRAISEMENT OF THEOSOPHY BY THEOSOPHISTS

The terms in which the leading exponents of Theosophy extol their religio-philosophical scheme vie with the emphatic language in which Mary Baker G. Eddy described her religio-medical dispensation. In one respect a relative modesty characterizes the claims of the former party. They renounce the honor of originality, as also of direct divine inspiration. Their teaching, they say, is identical with a primitive Wisdom-Religion, and this has been in the world for an immense period, having been handed on by a line of highly perfected men, variously designated as Mahatmas, Adepts, Initiates, Masters, and the White Brotherhood. But while they are con-

tent to assume the rôle of transmitters, they enormously magnify their vocation, in that they claim to possess truth in all its depth and amplitude. Let a few statements illustrate. "Modern science," says Madame Blavatsky, "is ancient thought distorted and no more."[1] "The secret doctrine of the East contains the Alpha and Omega of universal science."[2] "Our work is a plea for the recognition of the Hermetic philosophy, the anciently universal Wisdom-Religion, as the only possible key to the Absolute in science and theology."[3] "The Wisdom-Religion was ever one and the same, and being the last word of possible human knowledge was therefore carefully preserved. It preceded by long ages the Alexandrian Theosophists, reached the modern, and will survive every other religion and philosophy."[4]

[1] The Secret Doctrine, I. 579.
[2] Ibid., III. 22.
[3] Isis Unveiled, Preface.
[4] Key to Theosophy, p. 9.

"Religion," writes Olcott, "has but one foundation—Theosophy."[5] "Modern metaphysics," observes Sinnett, "and to a large extent modern physical science, have been groping for centuries blindly after knowledge which occult philosophy has enjoyed in full measure all the while."[6] "Theosophy is the essence of religion and of all religions worthy of the name."[7] "Theosophy," asserts Judge, "is that ocean of knowledge which spreads from shore to shore of the evolution of sentient beings. . . . Embracing both the scientific and the religious, Theosophy is a scientific religion and a religious science."[8] In short, the whole round of important truth, metaphysical, religious, and scientific, is claimed for Theosophy. It is described as the one source of adequate guidance, and, according to Madame Blavatsky, its

[5] Theosophy, Religion, and Occult Science, p. 39.
[6] The Occult World, p. 1.
[7] The Growth of the Soul, p. 42.
[8] The Ocean of Theosophy, p. 1.

illuminating rays did not break through the fog of human systems any too soon. "Had the formation of the Theosophical Society," she affirms, "been postponed a few years longer, one half of the civilized nations would have become by this time rank materialists, and the other half anthropomorphists and phenomenalists."[9]

[9] Key to Theosophy, p. 36.

## CHAPTER III

## THE ATTITUDE ASSUMED TOWARD COMPETING FAITHS

The placing of Theosophy upon such a lofty plane and the assignment to it of such a wide province were naturally accompanied by disparaging references to rival systems. In this adverse judgment the Spiritualism with which it was historically connected, and out of which in a sense it emerged, was not spared. Madame Blavatsky took pains in her first work to speak of it in slighting terms. She declared that the materialized forms produced in seances were not the actual forms of the persons with whom communication was supposed to be made, "but rather, their portrait statues, constructed, animated, and operated by

the elementaries."[1] She stated, further, that the passivity which is a condition of effective mediumship is a source of exposure to foreign and deleterious influences, as is made plain by the notorious fact that mediums are generally either sickly or, what is worse, inclined to some abnormal vice.[2] In her Key to Theosophy she taught that the spirits of the dead cannot return to earth except in rare cases, and that materializations and such like phenomena are produced by the astral double of the medium or of some one present, or by the astral shells of vanished personalities, or by elementals, never by the conscious individuality of the disembodied.[3] Further on in the same treatise she makes this statement: "Theosophists accept the phenomena of 'materialization,' but reject the theory that it is produced

[1] Isis Unveiled, I. 70.
[2] Ibid., I. 490.
[3] Key to Theosophy, pp. 28, 29.

by 'spirits'; that is, the immortal principles of disembodied persons. Theosophists hold that when the phenomena are genuine—which is a fact of rarer occurrence than is generally believed—they are produced by *larvæ*, the eidolons or kamalokic 'ghosts' of the dead personalities."[4] She also records the judgment that mediumship opens the door to "a swarm of spooks good, bad, and indifferent." "All this dealing with the dead is necromancy and a most dangerous practice."[5] In line with these sharp criticisms, she sometimes specified the putting down of Spiritualism as one of the main objects of Theosophy.[6] Similar estimates of Spiritualism and its phenomena might be cited from other writers. But not all exponents of Theosophy are given to quite so radical a disparagement. Thus

[4] Key to Theosophy, p. 336.

[5] Ibid., pp. 188–193.

[6] Letter written in 1884 and cited by Lillie, Madame Blavatsky and her Theosophy, p. 16.

W. J. Colville makes room for a legitimate order of spiritualistic transactions. "Mediumship," he says, "has often been an erratic manifestation of spiritual power, but in its highest phases it is strictly theosophical, though in its lowest it is nothing more than 'gray magic.' "[7] The point of view contained in these words would seem to have made some progress in recent years. We note that an English observer makes bold to state, "There is no talk now about putting down Spiritualism; in fact, the two cults are at present coquetting affectionately."[8] Whatever their differences and incompatibilities, they have a connecting bond in their common appetite for occult and strange phenomena.

The vitality of its interest in occultism serves also to give to Theosophy a certain association with astrology,

[7] Studies in Theosophy, 1891, p. 224. Compare E. C. Farnsworth, Special Teachings from the Arcane Science, pp. 159, 160.

[8] Maskelyne, The Fraud of Modern Theosophy, second edition, 1912, p. 39.

though the formal attitude assumed toward the latter by the advocates of the former has not been uniform. Madame Blavatsky was distinctly appreciative. "It is now amply proved," she wrote, "that horoscopes and judiciary astrology are not quite based on fiction, and that the stars and constellations, consequently, have an occult and mysterious influence on, and connection with, individuals. And if with the latter, why not with nations, races, and mankind in bulk?"[9] Again she remarked: "Every student of occultism knows that the heavenly bodies are closely related during each Manvantara with the mankind of that special cycle; and there are some who believe that each great character born during that period has as every other mortal has—only in far stronger degree—his destiny outlined within its proper constellation or star."[10] The position

[9] The Secret Doctrine, I. 647.
[10] Ibid., III. 341.

of the founder, as thus indicated, was not followed by the whole body of Theosophists. "The members of the Society," says G. R. S. Mead, "take up the most divergent and contradictory attitudes with regard to astrology; some believe in it with various qualifications, a few even make it a religion, as it were; some ridicule it as an absurd superstition, and proclaim the astrologer a charlatan; the majority are inclined to think there may be something in it, but are content to admit their ignorance of the art, and what is more their indifference to it."[11] The writer of this extract may be presumed to have been well informed; but we surmise that it will be found difficult for Theosophists as a body, with their bent to magnify the worth of the mystical and magical scheme of antiquity, to take up an attitude of sheer indifference toward astrology.

[11] Extracts from The Vahan, edited by Sarah Corbett, p. 616.

As respects the great religions, Theosophy asserts a broad proposition which might seem to imply that they stand upon a substantial parity. It pronounces them all to be identical in their esoteric content, however widely they may be contrasted in their exoteric or popular form. "Theosophy," says Leadbeater, "is identical with esoteric Buddhism and Hinduism, but then so it is with esoteric Zoroastrianism, esoteric Mohammedanism, and esoteric Christianity."[12] In less direct terms the following words of Mrs. Besant emphasize the idea that fundamentally the great religions are one: "Whether the person pray to Buddha, to Vishnu, to Christ, to the Father, it matters not at all."[13]

But notwithstanding this formal proposition on the underlying identity of religions, Theosophical writings con-

[12] Extracts from The Vahan, p. 4.
[13] The Seven Principles of Man, p. 58.

tain not a little in the line of a relative disparagement of Christianity and a relative glorification of the leading systems of the East, especially those which have had their historic theater in India. In general, the champions of Theosophy speak of Christian missionaries in very contemptuous terms, and some of them give abundant evidences of a veritable spite toward Christianity. This is emphatically true of Madame Blavatsky. In various ways she gives expression to her appetite for a virtual vilification. "The Israelitish Scriptures," she says, "drew their hidden wisdom from the primal Wisdom-Religion that was the source of the other Scriptures, only it was sadly degraded by being applied to things and mysteries of this earth, instead of those in the higher and ever-present, though invisible, spheres."[14] She charges the Biblical religion with

[14] The Secret Doctrine, III. 172.

wholesale borrowing. "While the doctrines, ethical code, and observances of the Christian religion were all appropriated from Brahmanism and Buddhism, its ceremonies, vestments, and pageantry were taken bodily from Lamaism."[15] And much of this borrowing would seem not to have had the merit of being at first hand, for she tells us in another connection: "The doctrines of the Gospels, and even of the Old Testament, have been taken bodily from the book of Enoch. The whole of the Pentateuch was adapted to fit in with the facts given."[16] On the character of the Pentateuch she makes this envenomed comment: "In its hidden meaning, from Genesis to the last word of Deuteronomy, the Pentateuch is the symbolical narrative of the sexes, and is an apotheosis of Phallicism, under astronomical and physiological personations."[17] Scarcely

[15] Isis Unveiled, II. 211.
[16] The Secret Doctrine, III. 87.
[17] The Secret Doctrine, III. 172, 173.

more complimentary is her estimate of the supreme objects of worship recognized by Christianity. She names the gods of so-called monotheistic religions "a blasphemous and sorry caricature of the ever unknowable,"[18] and affirms of Jehovah, "It is only in the capacity of the genius of the moon, the latter being credited in the old cosmogony with being the parent of the earth, that he can ever be regarded as the creator of our globe."[19] With an obvious intent to heap scorn upon Catholic Christianity, she extols Simon Magus and rates his system "as near to Occult Truth as any."[20]

The most that Madame Blavatsky concedes to Christianity is that Jesus in respect of disposition was "as noble and loving" as Gautama, and this statement she qualifies by the declaration that he was handicapped by appearing "among another and less

[18] Ibid., Introduction, p. xx.
[19] Ibid., II. 474.
[20] Ibid., III. 113, 465, 466.

spiritual race."[21] In repeated instances she affirms the primacy of India in religion and philosophy. "It is maintained," she writes, "that India is the only country in the world which still has among her sons adepts who have the knowledge of the seven systems. . . . As for the Hebrews, they never had the higher keys."[22] She reads a lesson of humility to Christian scholars who have dealt with Eastern systems in these terms: "One need not go very deep into the literature of the Orientalists to become convinced that in most cases they do not even suspect that in the arcane philosophy of India there are depths which they have not sounded, and *cannot* sound, for they pass on without perceiving them."[23]

While Madame Blavatsky outruns the great majority of Theosophical writers in the measure of her scorn-

[21] The Secret Doctrine, III. 382.
[22] Ibid., I. 311.
[23] Isis Unveiled, II. 102, 103.

ful references to the Bible and Christianity, a spice of the same element enters into the literature of the entire school. In rare instances, as in case of Colville, a serious effort may be made to place the Christian religion on a parity with the leading systems of India; but even in these instances this measure of credit is given not to historic Christianity, but to the scheme which Theosophic dogmatism has constructed largely out of Hindu materials and has chosen to identify with esoteric Christianity. Either implicitly or explicitly the preference for the faiths of India comes to expression. The explicit form appears in the remark of Judge: "Buddhism is the last of the great Avatars, and is in a larger circle than is Jesus of the Jews."[24] Equally clear in their testimony to the direction of preference are the words of Leadbeater: "The broad outlines of the great truths

[24] The Ocean of Theosophy, p. 120.

have been widely known in the world for thousands of years, and are so known at the present day. It is only we in the West who, in our incredible self-sufficiency, have remained ignorant of them."[25] Mrs. Besant may also be cited in this connection, for while she praises Jesus in fervent words, she makes him a debtor to Eastern wisdom, of which he is assumed to have been a devoted student for many years.[26] Moreover, she fulfills the part of a resolute apologist of Hinduism. To use the language of a competent observer: "The depths to which Mrs. Besant habitually descends in defending Hinduism will hardly be believed. There is scarcely an exploded doctrine, scarcely a superstitious observance, which she has not defended. No one who has not scanned the files of the Central Hindu College Magazine or the reports of Mrs. Besant's lectures

[25] An Outline of Theosophy, p. 9.
[26] Esoteric Christianity, p. 130.

in India has any idea of the indescribable rubbish which Theosophy has presented to its Hindu members."[27]

[27] J. N. Farquhar, Modern Religious Movements in India, 1915, pp. 287, 288.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE BASIS OF AUTHORITY

On this theme two leading assumptions run through Theosophical writings: (1) There exists, and has existed from time immemorial, a body of advanced men, named Adepts, Mahatmas, Initiates, etc., who have served as depositaries of the primitive Wisdom-Religion, and who are the only competent interpreters of man and the universe to whom any access is provided. (2) This body of advanced men makes use of selected members of the Theosophical Society as instruments for disseminating such portions of their superior knowledge as may fitly be imparted to the present age.

Leading Theosophical writers treat both of these assumptions as alike fundamental and indisputable. The

high strain in which they depict the Mahatma or Adept is as marked a specimen of enthusiastic idealization as can be found in modern literature. "A Mahatma," says Mrs. Besant, "is a living man who has evolved more rapidly than the vast majority of the human race, and has reached a stage of mental, moral, and spiritual development which will be attained by the race in the future only at the end of millenniums of years. He is the perfected flower of humanity, the ideal man, the promise of the future realized to-day. In him the spiritual nature is developed and works unrestrainedly through the mental and physical, so that he has become the master of all forces in nature and can utilize them at will."[1] The Adepts, Sinnett assures us, can converse with one another at any distance, "and their clairvoyant faculties are so perfect and complete that they amount to a species of

[1] Exposition of Theosophy, p. 19.

omniscience as regards mundane affairs."[2] He even expresses the belief that they are as far above ordinary mankind as man is above the insects of the field.[3] Their word, Judge tells us, has finality against any competing authority. "Let science laugh as it may, the Adepts are the only true scientists. . . . The records of the visions of the greater and lesser seers, through the ages, are extant to-day. Of their mass nothing has been accepted except that which has been checked and verified by millions of independent observations. . . . If we find the Adepts stating that the moon is not a mass thrown off from the earth in cooling, but on the contrary the progenitor of this globe, we need not fear the jeers of a science that is as uncertain and unsafe in many things as it is positive."[4] J. D. Buck expresses a like view of the relative

[2] The Occult World, p. 15.
[3] Esoteric Buddhism, p. 202.
[4] Echoes from the Orient, pp. 10–14.

competency of the Adepts, classing them as men "who possess a knowledge of science so profound as to dwarf into insignificance our boasted modern discoveries."[5]

One important source at the command of the Adepts is an unparalleled collection of the world's literature. This unique advantage is thus depicted by Madame Blavatsky: "The members of several esoteric schools—the seat of which is beyond the Himalayas—claim to have in their possession the *sum total* of sacred and philosophical works in manuscript and type: all the works, in fact, that have ever been written, in whatever language or characters, since the art of writing began; from the ideographic hieroglyphs down to the alphabet of Cadmus and the Devanagan."[6] With this statement she couples a report of the existence in the subterranean

[5] The Nature and Aim of Theosophy, p. 32.
[6] The Secret Doctrine, Introduction, p. xxiii.

passages under a single hamlet, located in a mountain gorge, of a collection of books too large to find accommodation in the British Museum.

The principal habitat of the Adepts is commonly placed by Theosophical opinion in Tibet. "They constitute," writes Sinnett, "a Brotherhood, or Secret Association, that ramifies all over the East, but the principal seat of which for the present I gather to be in Tibet."[7] Olcott evidently regarded this as the orthodox view when he wrote: "On the high plateau of the Himavat are men who know psychology, men who are the successors of a thousand generations of Aryan and Hindu sages, who all this time have known what man is and what his powers are."[8]

On the closeness of the bond between the Adepts and the Theosophical Society our informants would have us

[7] The Occult World, p. 24.
[8] Theosophy, Religion, and Occult Science, pp. 136, 137.

understand that there is no just ground for question. This point is obviously, for them, of great practical moment, since the existence of Adepts would be no sort of a credential for their system apart from the assumed choice of the Adepts to use them as a channel for their superior wisdom. As a matter of fact, the most conspicuous exponents of Theosophy have followed the path of logical consistency, and have not been deterred by an undue modesty from claiming the cooperation of the Great Brotherhood. Madame Blavatsky represented herself as only a kind of secondary agent in the production of the works bearing her name. In the announcement of Isis Unveiled she said: "The work now submitted to public judgment is the fruit of a somewhat intimate acquaintance with Eastern Adepts and study of their science."[9] Doubtless it was on the basis of her testimony that Sinnett felt authorized

[9] Isis Unveiled, Preface.

to report that great patches of the treatise were contributed outright by the Brothers.[10] On her essentially instrumental position in the production of The Secret Doctrine, Madame Blavatsky was very outspoken, declaring in the preface, "This work is a partial statement of what the author has been taught by more advanced students, supplemented, in a few details only, by the results of her own study and observation." Elsewhere she styled the Mahatmas the founders and guardians of the Theosophical Society. "We call them," she said, " 'Masters' because they are our teachers, and because from them we have derived all the Theosophical truths, however inadequately some of us have expressed them, and others understood them."[11] As is indicated by this statement, she was too prudent to make the gentlemen behind the veil respon-

[10] The Occult World, p. 160.
[11] The Key to Theosophy, pp. 275, 277.

sible for all verbal peculiarities in Theosophical writings. While she asserts that "there are passages entirely dictated by them verbatim," she adds, "but in most cases they only inspire the ideas, and leave the literary form to the writers."[12] So speaks the high priestess of Theosophy, and it is evidently but a sober statement of her teaching which is given us in this proposition: "The Theosophical Society is the medium through which the Brothers have undertaken to present to the world their long-cherished doctrines, in such form as the world is found ready to receive."[13]

It will perhaps be objected to the above that Theosophists have sometimes asserted that members of their Society are privileged to be neutral on the question of the existence and agency of Mahatmas. But the motive for such statements has not come

[12] Ibid., p. 278.
[13] Buck, The Nature and Aim of Theosophy, pp. 34, 35.

from the logic of their system, but, rather, from the difficulty of securing any sort of credibility to the postulate on the actual existence of Mahatmas. Mrs. Besant, however she may have expressed herself elsewhere, simply conformed to the logical demand when she said: "If there are no Masters, then the Theosophical Society is an absurdity."[14]

[14] Article in Lucifer, December, 1890, cited by Garrett, Isis Very Much Unveiled, pp. 106, 107.

## CHAPTER V

## THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

On this subject Theosophic Dogmatism is characterized in the first place by a resolute denial of the personality of God, that is, of God considered as the Highest Being, the Absolute. "We reject," says Madame Blavatsky, "the idea of a personal or extra-cosmic and anthropomorphic God,"[1] and from other statements we gather that the rejection extends to the assumption of divine personality in any form in which it has had currency in the Christian Church. Her fundamental preference for the impersonal appears in her substitution of "Universal Principle" or "Absolute Principle" for the name of God, as also in such declarations as that the

[1] The Key to Theosophy, p. 61.

Absolute does not think or exist but is, rather, thought and existence.[2] Scarcely less distinctly it appears in her rating of Von Hartmann's philosophy as the highest philosophy of the West.[3] To a Being thus conceived, creation, as the execution of plan or purpose, must evidently be counted foreign, and we have in place of it the notion of an inexplicable alternation of the differentiation and reabsorption of the world. "The esoteric doctrine," writes Madame Blavatsky, "teaches, like Buddhism and Brahmanism, and even the persecuted Kabala, that the one infinite and unknown essence exists from all eternity, and in regular and harmonious successions is either passive or active. In the poetical phraseology of Manu these conditions are called the 'day' and the 'night' of Brahma."[4] Con-

[2] The Key to Theosophy, pp. 64, 65.

[3] The Secret Doctrine, I. 281.

[4] Isis Unveiled, II. 264. Compare Judge, Ocean of Theosophy, pp. 14, 15.

sistently with the negation of the personality of God, Madame Blavatsky rules out the propriety of prayer, except in the sense of an internal command; and this she decides to let pass as a prayer to the Father in heaven in the esoteric meaning of the phrase—that is, to God in man himself.[5] An equivalent interpretation of the Father in heaven has been proffered by A. A. Wells.[6] Some representatives of Theosophy may have been rather more appreciative of prayer in its objective relation than was the foundress, but in common they reject the personality of the Supreme Being.

Closely associated with this feature is an extreme emphasis on the transcendence of God as Absolute Principle. The vacuity into which Neo-Platonism pushes the thought of God is rivaled by one and another writer, and especially by the most authori-

[5] Key to Theosophy, pp. 66–68.
[6] Extracts from The Vahan, p. 143.

tative of all. Speculation on the Ultimate Principle, Madame Blavatsky informs us, is impossible. "It is beyond the range and reach of thought." In spite of the paradoxical appearance of the statement, in the Absolute is realized "the idea of eternal Non-Being which is the One Being. It cannot be conceived to have any relation to the finite and conditioned."[7] "As to the Absolute," says Judge, "we can do no more than say, It Is. None of the great teachers of the School ascribe qualities to the Absolute."[8] "The term Absolute," remarks G. R. S. Mead, "must be kept for the idea of the Deity beyond being."[9]

It is quite obvious that in pursuing this point of view the exponents of Theosophy have not respected greatly either the claims of rationality or of self-consistency. They might have re-

[7] The Secret Doctrine, I. 14, 45, III. 205; The Key to Theosophy, pp. 61, 62.

[8] The Ocean of Theosophy, pp. 14, 15.

[9] Extracts from the Vahan, p. 692.

minded themselves that to place the Absolute beyond being is no more eligible than to place Him below being, since either form of expression relegates him to nonentity or negates his being, and involves also the feat of getting a *plenum* out of a *vacuum*, since all things are confessedly from the Absolute. They would likewise have written to better edification if, while declaring the Absolute to be inconceivable, they had not applied to it such terms as Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless, and Immutable; for these terms, if there is any justification for using them, fulfill a descriptive function, while yet the strictly inconceivable is entirely out of the range of description. Equally, a normal respect for the demands of self-consistency would have vetoed the combination of the statement, that "all that which is emanates from the Absolute,"[10] with

[10] Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, I. 295; Judge, The Ocean of Theosophy, pp. 14, 15.

the declaration that the Absolute can have no relation with the finite and conditioned, the rational verdict being that between source and product there is unavoidably a real relation. Like all utra dogmatism which makes a pretense of agnosticism and high-flying transcendentalism, Theosophy gets badly mixed up in its exposition of ultimate reality.

What has been said thus far in the present chapter implies that the Theosophical doctrine of God and the universe is roundly pantheistic. Theosophists are not at all backward in confessing that their doctrine has this character. Mrs. Besant says that "the Wisdom-Religion teaches a profound pantheism," that technically she is a pantheist, and that "in theology Theosophy is pantheistic."[11] Madame Blavatsky abundantly illustrates every prominent feature of the radical Brah-

[11] Exposition of Theosophy, pp. 5, 28; Why I Am a Theosophist, p. 18.

manical pantheism which finds its culmination in the Vedanta system. As has been noted, she adopts the theory of differentiations from the Absolute, alternating with reabsorptions. In her interpretation the evolved world is a temporary illusion, as unreal as the reflection of the moon on the surface of the waters. As all is from the Absolute, evil has no other source; in fact, good and evil are aspects or sides of the One Being. To all grades of individuated being reabsorption is the appointed destiny. The Gods at the end of the cycle are merged in the one Absolute.[12]

Madame Blavatsky is credited with having used in one connection the words: "There is no God, personal or impersonal."[13] But this atheistic declaration is too exceptional to be emphasized. Properly she is character-

[12] Isis Unveiled, II. 264; The Secret Doctrine, I. 281, 295, 413, 414; II. 515; III. 449, 450; Key to Theosophy, pp. 63, 83, 111, 132; The Caves and Jungles of Hindustan, p. 49.

[13] Cited from the Theosophist, May, 1882.

ized as a radical pantheist, with a leaning to polytheism as against monotheism. This leaning comes out, on the one hand, in contemptuous references to the monotheistic religions,[14] and, on the other, in polytheistic representations of the creative function. In one instance she ascribes the creation of the bodies of men to the Lunar Pitris and the endowment of men with their immortal egos to the solar angels,[15] and in another instance she employs this language: "It is not the Principle, One and Unconditioned, nor even its reflection, that creates, but only the Seven Gods who fashion the universe out of eternal matter, unified into objective life by the reflection into it of the One Reality."[16] This polytheistic phase is clearly duplicated by Mrs. Besant. "Each Logos," she writes, "is to his own universe the central object of adoration, and his

[14] The Secret Doctrine, Introduction, p. xx, II. 158.
[15] Ibid., II. 88, 89.
[16] The Secret Doctrine, III. 209.

radiant ministers are rightly worshiped by those who cannot rise to the conception of this central deity."[17] It might be inferred from this statement that we do very well to stop with the Logos or Deity of our solar system, and so Leadbeater advises us.[18] Sinnett postulates an object of reverence somewhat more local, telling us that a Mighty Being, the Spirit of the Earth, presides over the growth and health of the planet.[19] Evidently, in Theosophy pantheism has made friends with polytheism, and herein the assimilation to Hinduism is very marked.

[17] Some Problems of Life, pp. 82, 83.
[18] An Outline of Theosophy, p. 24.
[19] The Growth of the Soul, p. 300.

# CHAPTER VI

## COSMOLOGICAL THEORIES

THEOSOPHY asserts the eternity of the world, though certainly with doubtful consistency by the pen of Madame Blavatsky. On the one hand she lays down, as a fundamental proposition, "the eternity of the universe *in toto* as a boundless plane, periodically the playground of numberless universes, incessantly manifesting and disappearing."[1] She asserts, furthermore, that matter is eternal, the basis on which the Universal Mind builds its ideation.[2] On the other hand she says: "The Creative Force is eternal as noumenon; as a phenomenal manifestation in its aspects it has a beginning and must therefore have an end."[3] Moreover,

[1] The Secret Doctrine, I. 16.
[2] Ibid., I. 280.
[3] Ibid., I. 373, 374.

having defined creation as the Eternal Reality casting a periodical reflection of itself on the infinite spatial depths, she adds: "This reflection which you regard as the objective material universe, we consider as a temporary illusion and nothing else."[4] Putting the various statements together we seem to reach the conclusion that the world, as distinguished from the Primal Cause or Eternal Reality, had a beginning as a phenomenal manifestation, and is in fact a temporary illusion. A succession of such worlds is indeed affirmed; but it is not warrantable to assume that the addition of the temporal inaugurates the eternal.

The thesis on the illusory character of the world, which the foundress borrowed from Hindu philosophy, has found occasional utterance in the Theosophical camp. Thus A. A. Wells has remarked: "We must never forget that, after all, the great law of Karma,

[4] The Key to Theosophy, p. 83.

and everything with which it deals, are but portions of the great illusion—the Mâyâ which defends our weak eyes from the overpowering radiance of the divine glory."[5] There is some ground, however, for suspecting that one and another among Theosophists entertain a rather scanty appreciation for the genuine Hindu doctrine of Mâyâ or world-illusion. We notice that Sinnett is minded to interpret the doctrine as denoting only the relative impermanency of the world.[6]

Another general characteristic affirmed of the world is the universal diffusion of life and even of sentiency. Madame Blavatsky approves hylozoism as being in its philosophical sense correct pantheism.[7] Everything in the universe, she says, even down to the stones, has a consciousness of its kind.[8] Judge asserts that "all nature is sen-

[5] Extracts from the Vahan, pp. 153, 154.
[6] The Growth of the Soul, pp. 100, 101.
[7] The Secret Doctrine, II. 158.
[8] Ibid., I. 274.

tient."[9] "There is no difference," writes Burcham Harding, "save in degree, between the lives that are found in the minerals, in plants and trees, in animal and human bodies—for all are parts of the One Life."[10]

Madame Blavatsky has been cited on the necessary function of the Theosophical Society as a bulwark against a threatening materialism. Mrs. Besant dignifies the office of the Society in similar terms. "I look upon the reproclamation of Theosophy," she says, "as the deliberate answer of the Masters, the Adepts, to the rise of materialism in the Western world."[11] In view of such statements, we naturally are led to expect that Theosophical writings will appear thoroughly charged with spiritualistic or anti-materialistic teachings. But that is not found to be the case. If by materialism is meant a theoretic system

[9] The Ocean of Theosophy, p. 2.
[10] Brotherhood Nature's Law, pp. 5, 6.
[11] Exposition of Theosophy, p. 29.

of a particular type, then Theosophy can be said, rather, to compromise with materialism than to carry out a consistent opposition. It does not uniformly assign a distinct primacy to spirit as against matter. Doubtless statements may be found, like the declaration of Colville, that "spirit is both Alpha and Omega."[12] But representations which carry a quite different suggestion also occur. No justice is done to the primacy of spirit in Madame Blavatsky's declaration that spirit and matter "are but the two facets of the one Absolute Existence";[13] or in the further assertion, "spirit and matter are one, being the two opposite poles of the universal manifested substance";[14] or in the plain admission that she insists upon the identity of spirit and matter, rating spirit as potential matter, "and matter simply crystallized spirit, just as ice

[12] Studies in Theosophy, p. 201.
[13] The Secret Doctrine, I. 326.
[14] The Key to Theosophy, p. 215.

is solidified steam."[15] In her psychological theory, as cited by Mrs. Besant,[16] she gives place to the thoroughly materialistic representation that "thought is matter." Mrs. Besant unequivocally adopts this point of view, and carries it out in a series of statements as crassly materialistic as can be found in the literature of modern materialism. "A Thought form," she affirms, "is a material image created by the mind out of the subtle matter of the higher psychic plane in which it works. This form, composed of the rapidly vibrating atoms of the matter of that region, sets up vibrations all around it."[17] "Pure and lofty thoughts," she says, "are composed of rapid vibrations. . . . Vibrations of consciousness are ever shaking out one kind of matter and building in another."[18] "Thought images," she tells us, "once generated,

[15] Ibid., pp. 33, 34.
[16] Karma, pp. 74, 75.
[17] Karma, p. 13.
[18] Thought Power, pp. 27, 28.

assume an existence of their own, pass outward into the astral realm, and act therefrom on the minds of other men, influencing them to action."[19] Commending the same point of view, Leadbeater teaches that thoughts are in a real sense things and to clairvoyant sight assume form and color. Rate of vibration, he indicates, is a principal determinant of the grade of being. "Physical matter may become astral, or astral may become mental, if only it be sufficiently subdivided, and caused to vibrate with the proper degree of rapidity."[20] While the soul of man, urges Sinnett, is much more subtle and lasting than the body, it is itself "a material reality."[21] With Judge we find the comprehensive statement that the universe exists "for the purpose of raising the entire mass of manifested matter up to the stature, nature, and dignity of conscious god-

[19] Exposition of Theosophy, pp. 13–15.
[20] An Outline of Theosophy, pp. 38, 86.
[21] The Occult World, p. 19.

hood;"[22] and Mrs. Besant makes it an important part of man's task to sublime matter into spirit.[23] In short, it is plain enough that Theosophy, as understood by its leading exponents, is broadly streaked with materialistic tenets. So far at least as psychological theory is concerned, it rivals the ultra declarations of such materialists as Vogt, Moleschott, Büchner, and Cabanis.

A detailed description of the universe as a whole does not appear to have been attempted by representatives of modern Theosophy. The domain with which they are specially concerned is that complex sphere which serves as a theater of man's multiplied peregrinations. About this they have, or at least claim to have, a mass of information that is truly astonishing. Our earth, they tell us, is one in a chain of seven planets. This chain is

[22] The Ocean of Theosophy, p. 60.
[23] Reincarnation, p. 12.

quite extraordinary, most of its members being entirely unknown to astronomy as commonly understood. Only our earth, according to Madame Blavatsky, is in the visible domain.[24] Sinnett, on the other hand, includes Mars and Mercury in that domain, and assumes that only four out of the seven planets in the chain are composed of matter so ethereal that telescopes cannot take cognizance of them.[25] Reckoning Mars as third in the list, the earth as fourth, and Mercury as fifth, he supposes existence on the first and seventh to be of the Devachanic (or heavenly) type, on the second and sixth to be astral in nature.[26] Man as a subject of evolution and progress is under compulsion to visit these several spheres in a series of rounds, and the time required for the repeated gyrations of his pilgrimage is nothing less than enormous. Even

[24] The Key to Theosophy, p. 87.
[25] Esoteric Buddhism, pp. 136, 137.
[26] The Growth of the Soul, pp. 263, 264.

the number of periods which he must spend on the earth, is well-nigh overwhelming to contemplate. "An individual unit, arriving on a planet for the first time in the course of a round, has to work through seven races on that planet before he passes on to the next, and each of these races occupies the earth for a long time. Within the limits of each race there are seven subdivisional races, and again within the limits of each subdivision there are seven branch races. Through all these races, roughly speaking, each individual human unit must pass during his stay on earth, each time he arrives there, on a round of progress, through the planetary system."[27]

Supposing the recollection of one journey to be carried on to the next, the intinerant would have an opportunity to note great changes in the earth's surface, such as the sinking of the immense continent of Atlantis in

[27] Sinnett, Esoteric Buddhism, pp. 58, 59.

the region now occupied by the Atlantic Ocean, and also the submergence of the greater part of the continent of Lemuria, which once stretched from the Indian Ocean to Australia. The one event occupied, we are informed with remarkable precision, a period of 11,466 years, and the other took place about 700,000 years earlier.[28] With an insight in like manner greatly transcending the measures of ordinary science our authorities assure us that besides the planetary chain of which the earth is a member there are six others within the solar system;[29] but any considerable number of details respecting these seems not to have been divulged by the Mahatmas.

The preference entertained by the Theosophists for ancient mythology, over against the inductions of recent science, is very strikingly illustrated by their assumption on the very important

[28] Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, II. 6–8; Sinnett, Esoteric Buddhism, pp. 64, 65.

[29] Sinnett, Esoteric Buddhism, p. 197.

relation sustained by the moon to the earth. "It is the moon," writes Madame Blavatsky, "that plays the largest and most important part, as well in the formation of the earth itself, as in the peopling thereof with human beings. . . . The moon is far older than the earth; and it is the latter which owes its being to the former. . . . The moon is the giver of life to our globe."[30]

The superiority of Theosophical information to the conclusions of science crops out likewise in the representation respecting a deep orifice in the polar regions. "It has been vaguely known," says Sinnett, "by occult students for a long time that in the neighborhood of the north pole there is an orifice in the ground penetrating to inconceivable depths. This wonderful shaft has been regarded as fulfilling some mysterious need of the earth, analogous

[30] The Secret Doctrine, I. 180, 386; II. 64. Compare Judge Echoes from the Orient, p. 14.

to breathing, and it has been supposed that a similar shaft connects the south pole with the interior."[31]

The fruitfulness of mythology for the Theosophical mind is also illustrated in notions on the existence and functions of "elementals." Madame Blavatsky gives this name to the creatures evolved in the four kingdoms of earth, air, fire, and water, and called by the Kabalists gnomes, sylphs, salamanders, and undines. "These elementals are the principal agents of disembodied but never visible spirits at seances, and the producers of all the phenomena except the subjective."[32] The Adepts, Sinnett informs us, have good reasons for preserving a relative silence respecting the elementals; he considers himself, however, qualified to state that they are semi-intelligent creatures of the astral light,[33] one division of which

[31] The Growth of the Soul, p. 297.
[32] Isis Unveiled, Preface, pp. xxix, xxx.
[33] Esoteric Buddhism, p. 105.

may have been formed by the human will from the ocean of elemental essence, while other varieties are due to natural evolution.[34]

The chapter should not be closed without a reference to world periods as conceived by Theosophists. With genuine Hindu prodigality they pile up the years in their reckoning to a dizzy height. The Manvantaras, we are told, follow one another like successive waves, and a Manvantara is a grand period comprising 311,040,000,000,000 years. The proper history of man began no less than 18,000,000 years ago.[35]

[34] The Growth of the Soul, p. 220.

[35] Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, I. 36; II. 9; Judge, Echoes from the Orient, pp. 38–40; The Ocean of Theosophy, pp. 21, 22.

## CHAPTER VII

## CONCEPTIONS OF MAN AND HIS DESTINY

To achieve a clear exposition of this theme is no easy task. The predilection of Theosophists for the grandiose and complex, their pedantic multiplication of Sanskrit terms in place of plain English, and their slovenly neglect of the proper distinction between the material and the spiritual, combine to weary and puzzle the mind of the interpreter. If any should be disposed to blame us for lack of clarity and simplicity in our treatment of the present subject, let him blame still more the Mahatmas for not having furnished better guidance to the oracles of Theosophical wisdom.

In the evolutionary scheme of The-

osophy the genesis of man is depicted as starting from the divine essence, and then effected through successive stages up to the present stage of concreteness or condensation. "When the globe was forming," as one of our oracles reports, "the first root-race was more or less ethereal and had no such body as we now inhabit. The cosmic environment became more dense and a second race appeared, soon after which the first wholly disappeared. Then the third came on the scene, after an immense lapse of time, during which the second had been developing the bodies needed in the third. At the coming of the fourth root-race it is said that the present human form was evolved, although gigantic, and in some respects different from our own. It is from this point—the fourth race—that the Theosophical system begins to speak of man as such."[1] That the race which eventuated in man proper

[1] Judge, Echoes from the Orient, p. 23.

is not represented by fossil remains in remote geological formations is explained by the tenuity of the astral bodies which at that stage were in evidence.[2] In fact, as another informant assures us, in tracing man's genesis we are carried back to a kind of nebula, a basis of humanity which consisted simply in a great cloud of divine essence."[3] A gaseous entity of the sort indicated could not be expected to leave definite memorials in the geological records. That much we concede to the Theosophic apologist, though not a little taken back by his identification of the divine essence with an extended and volatile substance. But what about our nearer antecedents, the gigantic men of the fourth root-race? We suppose that Madame Blavatsky refers to this race when she teaches that "physical man was originally a colossal pretertiary

[2] Judge, Echoes from the Orient, pp. 39, 40.
[3] Leadbeater, An Outline of Theosophy, pp. 76, 77.

giant," and that "he existed 18,000,000 years ago."[4] What has become of his remains? Possibly it will be suggested that the gigantic race, as being identical with the Atlanteans, went below the plane of observation in the sinking of the continent of Atlantis. But, according to the reported figures, it took that continent 11,466 years to pass to its ocean grave, and it would seem that during so long a period some of the Atlanteans would have had the discretion to emigrate to higher and safer ground.

Americans and Europeans are defined as lineal descendants of the Atlanteans, or, more precisely, as Atlantean monads reincarnated.[5] As a further aid in locating ourselves we may note that in the septenary scheme which Theosophic insight has discovered to obtain in the cosmos we are in the fifth sub-race of the fifth race of the fourth

[4] The Secret Doctrine, II. 9.
[5] Judge, Echoes from the Orient, pp. 20, 21.

round.[6] This location involves the conclusion that our cyclic movements must go on for an incalculable period still. No plea of dizziness can be expected to secure our release from any of the rounds or from any of the minor circles included therein.

In Theosophical anthropology the assumption that man is septenary in nature, or includes within the compass of his being seven principles, is a fundamental dogma. Yet, strangely enough, Madame Blavatsky had not arrived at the knowledge of it at the time she wrote Isis Unveiled. In that elaborate treatise she not only failed to inculcate the septenary nature of man, but taught a contradictory view, as appears in this statement: "Man is triune: he has his objective physical body, his vitalizing astral body (or soul), the real man; and these are brooded over by the third—the sovereign, the immortal spirit."[7]

[6] Besant, The Seven Principles of Man, pp. 69, 70; Sinnett, Esoteric Buddhism, p. 58.

[7] Isis Unveiled, II. 588.

The list of seven principles in one of its earlier versions includes the following: (1) Body, or rupa; (2) vitality, or pranajiva; (3) astral body; (4) animal soul, or Kama-rupa; (5) human soul, or manas; (6) spiritual soul, or buddhi; (7) spirit, or atma.[8] In a later list we have these constituents: (1) Physical body; (2) etheric double; (3) jiva, or life-force; (4) astral vehicle; (5) manas; (6) buddhi; (7) atma.[9] Another version of the seven principles, also comparatively recent, gives this series: (1) dense body; (2) etheric double; (3) prana or vitality; (4) kama, or animal soul; (5) manas; (6) buddhi; (7) atma.[10] The first four of these are characterized as the perishable quatenary, and the last three as the immortal triad. It accords with the Theosophical disparagement of *personality* that this term should be applied to the perishable

[8] Judge, The Ocean of Theosophy, p. 31.
[9] Sinnett, The Growth of the Soul, p. 156.
[10] Besant, Death and After, p. 13.

quatenary.[11] The true man, the lasting *individuality*, is left thus to be identified with manas, buddhi, and atma. But it is not altogether clear how this triad is to be construed. One exponent of Theosophy tells us that the spirit, or atman, is no individual property of any man, but the divine essence which by its omnipresent light radiated through buddhi, its vehicle and direct emanation, pervades the whole body.[12] A second exponent informs us that both atma and buddhi are not properly incarnated in the present race, but occupy the body simply by shining upon manas, the principle which is really incarnated.[13] In any case the description of the triad, in which man's higher self consists, does not seem to introduce us to a well-compacted human subject. What we are led to contemplate is a mental or psychical principle with which, at

[11] Besant, The Seven Principles of Man, p. 24.
[12] Blavatsky, The Key to Theosophy, pp. 100. 101.
[13] Judge, The Ocean of Theosophy, p. 66.

first-hand or second-hand, a divine ray is connected.

Among the curious specifications on the composition and history of the human subject, which meet us in Theosophical literature, we select the following: The etheric double is a precise duplicate of the dense body, and the medium through which the electrical and vital currents play. It is composed of four ethers, distinguished by different degrees of fineness. Normally the etheric double is separated from the dense body only at death, but occasionally spiritualistic mediums experience at least a partial separation during the period of earthly life. In its separate state the etheric double is dissipated after a brief interval. The astral body is composed of a different and more subtle kind of matter. In this body the seven substates of astral matter are combined. It travels with exceeding rapidity, and either during earthly life or after

may show itself apart from the physical body. To one who is clairvoyant the manifestation easily occurs, and in case of one who is not it is possible by a greater or less appropriation of physical matter from the atmosphere for the astral body to acquire visibility. During earthly life the seven substates of astral matter are intermingled, but after death they are sorted into concentric shells, the densest being outside. These shells may function in spiritualistic seances. They must all be disintegrated before the deceased person can pass into the blissful region of Devachan. The period of disintegration, longer or shorter according to the preceding record of the subject, is properly characterized as a purgatorial period. To the region where the purgation takes place is given the name of Kamaloka. The elimination of the astral body leaves the person with the mind-body, which is composed of more subtle matter

still, taken from the four lower levels of Devachan, and disintegrating when these levels have been passed. It is egg-shaped, richly colored, and without differentiation of the senses.[14]

The life in Devachan, as Theosophists call their heaven, is not of strictly fixed duration, but is said to last from ten to fifteen centuries.[15] The measure of happiness enjoyed in Devachan is not claimed to be uniform for all subjects, but Theosophical writers are quite unanimous in the affirmation that no pain, sorrow, or disappointment can enter there. "It is," we are told, "a specially guarded part of the mental plane whence all sorrow and all evil are excluded by the action of the great spiritual intelligences who superintend human evolution."[16] In its type the Devachanic life is purely subjective, though it is

[14] See in particular Besant, Man and His Bodies.

[15] Blavatsky, The Key to Theosophy, p. 144; Sinnett, Esoteric Buddhism, p. 143; Leadbeater, Extracts from the Vahan, p. 36.

[16] Besant, The Ancient Wisdom, pp. 137, 138.

far from being recognized as such by the one who has entered into it. "The forms, scenery, etc., which the consciousness perceives in that condition are the creatures of its own mental energies."[17] There results, however, a gradual exhaustion of force, passing into semi-consciousness and ending in "birth into another personality."[18] It is in this reincarnate state that the sinner in general must reap the fruits of his evil deeds. Only the exceptional criminal is deprived of the temporary immunity from sufferings enjoyed in Devachan and is made to pay in Avitchi the penalty of subjective spiritual misery for a period.[19]

In spite of the emphatic description of the unalloyed bliss of Devachan, it would appear that the happy state is not perfectly guarded against an

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[17] Keightley, Extracts from the Vahan, p. 395; Sinnett, Esoteric Buddhism, pp. 81, 82.

[18] Sinnett, Ibid., p. 88.

[19] Sinnett, Esoteric Buddhism, p. 93; Colville, Studies in Theosophy, p. 172.

element of unrest. Even there arises the desire for active life, the thirst for sentient existence, which is the fundamental cause of reincarnation, as of all manifestation.[20] This is the inner ground of reincarnation operative in the individual. In addition there is the working of Karma, that is, of an unerring law of retribution, an impersonal ever-active principle which grips the world and determines both the fact and the conditions of rebirth. Until his score has been paid a man must be reborn, and in rebirth be given a lot correspondent with his antecedent record.[21]

The doctrine of reincarnation was taken over from Hinduism into the fundamentals of Theosophy, though in the transference there was a modification to the extent of rejecting the idea that a man may be reborn as an animal. The borrowing is apparent

[20] Besant, Reincarnation, p. 37.
[21] Blavatsky, The Secret Doctrine, I. 634.

not only from the content of the doctrine as set forth in standard writings, but also from the fact that it was first taken up and promulgated by the Theosophical leaders after they had gone to India. In Isis Unveiled, which was written in America, Madame Blavatsky repudiated reincarnation as any part of a regular economy, and treated it as emphatically exceptional. "Reincarnation," she wrote, "that is, the appearance of the same individual, or, rather, of the astral monad, twice on the same planet, is not a rule of nature; it is an exception, like the teratological phenomenon of a two-headed infant. It is preceded by a violation of the laws of harmony of nature, and happens only when the latter, seeking to restore its disturbed equilibrium, violently throws back into earth-life the astral monad which had been tossed out of the circle of necessity by crime or accident."[22] Nei-

[22] Isis Unveiled, I. 351, 352.

ther Gautama nor Pythagoras, she declared, intended to teach a literal metempsychosis, but employed the term in its esoteric sense and applied it to "the purely spiritual peregrinations of the human soul."[23] In the face of these unequivocal statements her subsequent attempt to explain away her denial of reincarnation[24] can be rated only as perfectly obvious and perfectly abortive prevarication. Olcott, with better discretion, as well as with larger honesty, stood by the facts, declaring that at the time of embarking for India (December 17, 1878), both Madame Blavatsky and himself thought that reincarnation is exceptional, and that the doctrine was not fully launched till 1881–82, though a bare allusion to it occurred in the Theosophist for October, 1879. The problem why the Mahatmas permitted the mistake he gave up as insoluble.[25]

[23] Ibid., I. 289.
[24] The Key to Theosophy, pp. 187, 188.
[25] Old Diary Leaves, pp. 283–289.

From repudiating the idea of reincarnation, Theosophy went on to affirming it in most generous measure. According to its pronouncement, it is not a few times only that the individual is reclothed with a body. "The actual normal number of incarnations for each monad is not far short of eight hundred."[26]

Since monads, or souls, are ever on hand for reincarnation, the demand for the creation, emanation, or evolution of new souls is evidently modified quite appreciably. We are informed that nothing of that kind has occurred since the middle of the fourth race,[27] and that "the total number of human egos included in our evolution is in round numbers about sixty billions."[28] How this long-standing numerical fixity of the race agrees with the common historical induction as to the progressive increase of population on the earth is a question that naturally

[26] Sinnett, Esoteric Buddhism, p. 61.
[27] Besant, The Seven Principles of Man, p. 69.
[28] Keightley, Extracts from the Vahan, p. 28.

arises. We have not observed that this question has been satisfactorily answered. Mrs. Besant's plea that those incarnated at any time constitute only a minor portion of the total number of souls is no real answer. Since souls are reincarnated after passing through a proper round of experiences, or, generally speaking, once in fifteen hundred years, a reason for a change of proportion between the incarnated and those awaiting incarnation is not apparent.

Lack of recollection of a previous life, it is claimed, is not an objection to the fact of preexistence, since the organs instrumental to reminiscence, which were operative in the former stage of existence, have perished; moreover, Buddhas and Initiates, it is averred, do remember their past incarnations, not to discuss what may be possible for less advanced spirits.[29]

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[29] Blavatsky, The Key to Theosophy, p. 162; Sinnett, The Growth of the Soul, pp. 54, 55.

As positive grounds for belief in reincarnation such facts are alleged as the appearance of great diversities within the limits of a given family, infant precocity, exceptional genius, and seeming discrepancy between present lot and desert.

The ideal goal toward which the series of incarnations is supposed to lead is Nirvana. However, the meaning attached to this term seems not to have been uniformly the same in Theosophical circles. Madame Blavatsky is free to employ forms of description which imply the complete submergence or negation of individuality. The consummation is not reached, she tells us, "till the unit is merged in the all, and subject and object alike vanish in the absolute negation of the Nirvanic state."[30] The immortality of an entity is to be understood only in relation to its cycle. At the end of that it is "one and identical

[30] The Secret Doctrine, I. 329, 330.

with the Universal Spirit, and no longer a separate entity."[31] On the other hand, statements occur in Theosophical writings which are designed to convey the impression that the individual does not so much suffer extinction as gain expansion in Nirvana. It does not appear that anything worth while has been accomplished toward clearing away Buddhistic mist on this subject.

Is Nirvana an absolutely final goal, or has it only a relative finality? Explicit testimony on this point is not often furnished. But if Mrs. Besant represents the prevailing conviction, the decision is for relative finality. It is her plain declaration that the one who has attained Nirvana returns to cosmic activity in a new cycle of manifestation.[32] As much may possibly be implied in the declaration of Madame Blavatsky that, according to the Brah-

[31] The Key to Theosophy, p. 106.

[32] Death and After, p. 69; Exposition of Theosophy, pp. 22, 23.

manical and esoteric doctrine, there is an endless evolution and reinvolution (or reabsorption) of the cosmos.[33] This at least suggests that what is in Nirvana is evolved again. If Madame Blavatsky meant to indorse this view, she would need to explain how the completely vanished individuals of her scheme could be recovered. On the whole, the conclusion is warranted that Theosophy sets forth no ultimate goal for men, unless it be in the complete cessation of personal existence. It does not offer any prospect of a satisfactory escape from the fearfully drawn out alternation between life and death, birth and dissolution, which has rested like a nightmare upon the soul of India.

[33] The Secret Doctrine, I. 148.

## CHAPTER VIII

## THE THEOSOPHIC PRINCIPLE OF AUTHORITY TESTED

Theosophists claim that their system is a reproduction of the ancient Wisdom-Religion, through the agency of perfected men called Mahatmas or Adepts, who have chosen to make use of the Theosophical Society as an instrument of communication. That this claim is fundamental need not be argued here. In a preceding chapter it was shown that the existence and effective agency of the Mahatmas has been a very vital assumption with Theosophical writers, and that it is only by a most palpable lapse from self-consistency that they can bring these matters under the category of the indifferent or optional. If they have not been favored with author-

itative instructors, it is plainly ridiculous for them to put forth multiplied dogmatic conclusions which are quite beyond the domain of concrete verification. Apart from the plea of exceptional instruction they have not the slightest warrant to claim for the mass of their propositions any better character than that of disputable conjectures. It is quite pertinent, therefore, to enumerate the various grounds for radical skepticism as to the assumed existence and agency of the Mahatmas, and we proceed at once to place these in order.

1. The primary and principal witness, Madame Blavatsky, is fundamentally discredited by her demonstrated capability of downright falsifying. This trait is conspicuously exhibited in her exposition of her relations with Spiritualism. As has been noticed, it suited her at a time when Theosophy was in full swing, to speak of Spiritualism in very disparaging terms. More

than this, she specified the putting down of Spiritualism as one of the main objects of the Theosophical movement,[1] and declared flatly that she never was a Spiritualist.[2] How flagrantly in these statements she has contradicted herself can be discovered by reviewing her correspondence with her countryman, A. N. Aksákoff. In the fall of 1874 she wrote: "I have now been a Spiritualist for more than ten years, and now all my life is devoted to the doctrine. I am struggling for it and trying to consecrate to it every moment of my life." In February, 1875, she declared, "I have sacrificed myself for Spiritualism, and in defense of my faith and the truth I am ready at any moment to lay my head on the block. . . . Now the spirits are my brothers and sisters, my father and mother. My John King is a

[1] Letter to the Pall Mall Gazette, April 26, 1884, cited by Lillie, Madame Blavatsky and Her Theosophy, p. 16.

[2] In Light, October 11, 1884, cited by Leaf in Solovyoff's Modern Priestess of Isis, pp. 228, 229.

sufficient recompense for all, he is a host in himself to me." Later in the same year she spoke as though the Theosophical Society, which was being founded, would take up Spiritualism along with other ingredients. "We want," she said, "to make an experimental comparison between Spiritualism and the magic of the ancients by following literally the old Cabbalas, both Jewish and Christian." In December, 1875, she remarked of Theosophy: "It is the same Spiritualism but under another name."[3] So by her own hand Madame Blavatsky convicted herself of being capable of barefaced falsehood. Her word, accordingly, makes a very slender foundation for the fact of intercommunion with an extraordinary class of men called Mahatmas.

2. Madame Blavatsky's worth as a witness is very much qualified by the

[3] For the citations see Solovyoff, A Modern Priestess of Isis, pp. 228–265.

evidence that she was capable of playing the rôle of the charlatan and trickster. Among the demonstrations which she afforded of this capability, that given at Adyar, India, was especially notable. At this place, which was made the headquarters of the Theosophists, the apartments of Madame Blavatsky were provided with very convenient adjuncts in the shape of an occult room with a shrine or cupboard so placed as to conceal a hole in the wall and furnished with sliding panels in the back through which, when the doors in front were closed, letters and other articles could be secretly introduced. These peculiarities in the furnishing of the house are not disputed by the apologists of Madame Blavatsky. They claim that they were made after her departure to Europe, early in 1884, by the custodians of the house, Mr. and Mrs. Coulomb, who were prompted to the deed by selfish and unfriendly motives.

In this way they would exculpate their leader from the charge of surreptitiously introducing pretended messages from the Mahatmas into the shrine and of using it for other fictitious marvels. But this apology is not at all convincing. Besides imputing to the Coulombs an incredible stretch of subtle machination, it is discredited by the fact that, in the absence of Madame Blavatsky, a zealous adherent, a native by the name of Damodar, held the keys to the occult room and the shrine. Moreover, there were extant some forty letters addressed mainly to Mrs. Coulomb and containing ample proof that the striking phenomena, which were so potent to win adherents among the Hindus, were matters of contrivance, both Mr. and Mrs. Coulomb, as employees of Madame Blavatsky, being used as coagents. As was to be expected, an attempt was made to rebut this documentary demonstration by the allegation that the letters were

in whole or in part forged. But the attempt must be pronounced quite futile. In the first place, the contents of the documents spoke strongly for their genuineness. "The letters contained scores of references to leading Hindus and government officials all over India, with details of what happened when Madame Blavatsky was in their houses and when she met them casually. No forger would have dared to invent such details. If they had been forged, a few personal inquiries would at once have exposed them."[4] In the second place, a careful investigation added a strong support to the impression of genuineness made by the letters. This investigation was made at the instance of the Society for Psychical Research. As its representative R. Hodgson went to India near the end of 1884, and gave three months to a painstaking examination of the character of the *phenomena*.

[4] Farquhar, Modern Religious Movements in India, p. 239.

All parties more nearly concerned were called to the witness stand, including Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott. One or another of the witnesses was discredited by cross-examination. The Coulombs, however, were not of this number. It was found impossible to break down any of their statements that were at all material, and where corroboration was in the nature of the case possible it was found not to be lacking. The result was wholly in favor of the genuineness of the damaging letters.[5] In the third place, the handwriting of the letters, according to the judgment of competent experts, was that of Madame Blavatsky. Referring to this point eight or nine years after the investigation which he had conducted in India, and having before him the best that Theosophical apologists were able to say, Hodgson felt authorized to declare: "The fact

[5] Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, Vol. III. pp. 201–400.

remains that in the opinion of the best experts obtainable the Blavatsky-Coulomb documents were undoubtedly written by Madame Blavatsky, and I know of no expert in handwriting who has examined the letters who has expressed any different opinion."[6]

The evidence just recounted that Madame Blavatsky, in the attempt to give credence to the existence and agency of Mahatmas, played a game of deception receives somewhat of a supplement in the testimony of Solovyoff. This Russian gentleman visited her almost daily for two months at Paris, and also had frequent interviews with her at Würzburg. In the latter place he detected her employment of trickery for the production of pretended marvels, and succeeded in eliciting from her a confession on the fictitious character of the phenomena to which she had been resorting

[6] Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, Vol. IX. p. 146.

as a means of propagandism. The confession was indeed quickly withdrawn, having been made without any real contrition. Solovyoff was well assured from that time that the marvelous performances of Madame Blavatsky could be reduced to a small residuum. "There is," he says, "one thing which I cannot explain: how she produced and stopped at will the various raps which were heard at a great distance all round her, and also the strange sounds like the tinkling of a small electrical machine. But with this manifestation is exhausted everything in her phenomena which I am unable to explain. . . . That Madame's soft hands, with their supple pointed fingers, were very clever in the execution of rapid movements, I have many times perceived. She had probably taken lessons in conjuring from some professor of white magic."[7]

The testimony of Olcott in favor of

[7] A Modern Priestess of Isis, pp. 146ff., 209, 210.

multiplied wonders by the hands of Madame Blavatsky can indeed be cited. But here the peculiarity of the witness nullifies the worth of the evidence. Hodgson found him so credulous and uncritical, so destitute of even ordinary powers of observation, that he felt compelled to treat his testimony as practically worthless; and Madame Blavatsky herself was free to speak of the weakness of Olcott, and even styled him "a psychologized baby."[8]

The alleged communications of the Mahatmas through W. Q. Judge are quite unworthy of any serious consideration. Paltry in matter, subordinated to the personal interests of Judge, and produced under conditions that in no wise call for the supposition that anything more than common mundane agency was back of them, they must be rated by an unprejudiced

[8] Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, Vol. III. pp. 210, 311.

mind as manifest fictions. Olcott attached to them this character, and Mrs. Besant was convinced that they were written by Judge, though she admitted for prudential reasons that he may have gotten suggestions from the Mahatmas.[9]

So the Theosophical claim respecting the existence and agency of Mahatmas is shadowed by substantial proof of fraudulent pretense on the part of its leading exponents.

3. The supposition that the Mahatmas, as a high order of intelligences, were a principal factor in the composition of the standard treatises of Theosophy is disproved by plain contradictions in the teachings of those treatises, by abundant evidence that their materials were drawn mostly from comparatively modern writings, and by peculiarities in their style.

In the preceding chapter note was taken of two glaring contradictions in

[9] See in particular Garrett, Isis Very Much Unveiled.

the teaching of Madame Blavatsky—namely, those relating to the number of components in man and to the doctrine of reincarnation. How happened it that the guardian Mahatmas, who are represented as virtually the authors of the treatises in which the contradictions occur, permitted their instruments to pen statements so diametrically opposed to one another? Plainly we have a token here of the mythical character of these beings.

That the supervisory function of the Mahatmas was very much of a nullity is also indicated by the palpable errors and plagiarisms discoverable in the standard treatises. Referring to Isis Unveiled a well-furnished critic remarks: "The book contains innumerable errors, many of them of the most rudimentary type. The commonest Sanskrit words are misspelt; the Buddhist doctrine of transmigration is grossly misrepresented; and the Bhagavadgita is confused with the Bhag-

avata Purana."[10] On the sources from which Madame Blavatsky drew her materials, mostly without acknowledgment, W. E. Coleman, who seems to have investigated the subject to the very foundations, makes illuminating remarks. "The books utilized in compiling Isis," he says, "were nearly all current nineteenth-century literature. Only one of the old and rare books named and quoted from was in Madame Blavatsky's possession—Henry More's Immortality of the Soul, published in the seventeenth century. One or two others dated from the early part of the present century; and all the rest pertained to the middle and latter part of this century. Our author made great pretensions to Cabbalistic learning; but every quotation from and every allusion to the Cabbala, in Isis and all her later works, were copied second-hand from certain books containing scattered quotations from

[10] Farquhar, Modern Religious Movements in India, p. 225.

Cabbalistic writings. Not a line of the quotations in Isis from the old time mystics, Paracelsus, Van Helmont, Cardan, Robert Fludd, Philalethes, Gaffarel, and others was taken from the original works; the whole of them are copied from other books containing scattered quotations from those writers. The same thing occurs with her quotations from Josephus, Philo, and the Church Fathers. . . . The Secret Doctrine, published in 1888, is of a piece with Isis. It is permeated with plagiarisms, and is in all its parts a rehash of other books. Two books very largely form the basis of this work—Wilson's translation of the Vishnu Purana and Professor Winchell's World Life. The Secret Doctrine is saturated with Hinduism and with Sanskrit terminology, and the bulk of this was copied from Wilson's Vishnu Purana."[11]

Letters purporting to come from the

[11] Cited in Solovyoff's A Modern Priestess of Isis, Appendix.

Mahatma Koot Hoomi, and published in Sinnett's Occult World and Esoteric Buddhism, contained plagiarized matter. One of them, with a well-nigh incredible audacity, incorporated almost verbatim a long passage from a recently delivered address of H. Kiddle, of New York.[12] Referring to these letters, as contained in Esoteric Buddhism, Coleman writes: "I find in them overwhelming evidence that all of them were written by Madame Blavatsky. . . . I have traced to its source each quotation from the Buddhist scriptures in the letters, and they were all copied from current English translations, including even the notes and explanations of the English translators. . . . The writer of these letters was an ignoramus in Sanskrit and Tibetan; and the mistakes and blunders in them, in these languages, are in exact accordance with the known ignorance of Madame Blavatsky there-

[12] Farquhar, Modern Religious Movements in India, pp. 231, 232

anent. Esoteric Buddhism, like all of Madame Blavatsky's works, was based upon wholesale plagiarism and ignorance."[13]

What further demonstration could be desired that the Mahatmas, as a superior order of intelligences, had nothing to do with the production of the standard writings of Theosophy? These loose, inaccurate, plagiarizing compilations are fully accounted for entirely apart from any reference to transcendent auxiliaries. No doubt they exhibit a considerable amount of ingenuity and acumen; but that much can be credited to Madame Blavatsky together with no mean capacity for industrious application.

4. The enlargement of acquaintance with Tibet in recent years strongly confirms the mythical character of the Mahatmas, who are reputed to have made that land their headquarters and to have gathered there all-comprehend-

[13] Cited in Solovyoff's book, pp. 363, 364.

ing libraries. The religion of the country gives no evidence that the people were favored with the presence of exceptionally endowed instructors. "Primitive Lamaism," says Waddell, "may be defined as a priestly mixture of Sivaite mysticism, magic, and Indo-Tibetan demonolatry, overlaid by a thin varnish of Mahayana Buddhism. And to the present day Lamaism still retains this character."[14] "The Lamas," as Waddell also states on the basis of ample direct investigation, "do not know anything about those spiritual mediums—the Mahatmas—which the Theosophists place in Tibet, and give an important place in Lamaist mysticism. The mysticism of the Lamas is a charlatanism of a mean necromantic order."[15]

The testimony of other recent explorers is fully in line with that of Waddell. As Farquhar says: "The

[14] The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism, 1895, p. 30.
[15] The Buddhism of Tibet, pp. 128, 129.

British expedition sent by Lord Curzon actually went to Lhassa, so that Tibet is now well known. Two of the most honored Hindu scholars in Calcutta have wandered all over the hills within British territory, visiting monasteries and libraries. They have brought many manuscripts both Sanskrit and Tibetan to Calcutta. How is it that there is not a scrap of corroboration of Madame Blavatsky's wonderful story? No one knows anything of the existence of the Masters, their lodge, or the libraries."[16]

When Madame Blavatsky wrote, Tibet was a land of mystery, and she naturally felt safe in locating her wonderful copartners, with their unparalleled literary accumulations, in that country. But history has unkindly lifted the veil, and the favorite retreat of the Mahatmas is found to be as empty of all tokens of their presence as is any other region.

[16] Modern Religious Movements in India, pp. 447, 448.

5. Theosophic teaching respecting the measureless stretch of the wisdom, or secret traditional knowledge, possessed by the Mahatmas, is burdened with incredible implications. These perfected men, it is claimed, have, as a body, known for ages all that is worth knowing. All along the Alpha and Omega of universal science have been their secure property. How happens it that the world has received no discoverable benefit from their marvelous equipment? Why have they done nothing to heal the manifold woes of mankind? An ordinary scientist, who has discovered an effective remedy for a destructive disease or plague would be rated as somewhat of a monstrosity if he should make a secret of his discovery. How, then, have these mighty Masters managed so to hide their knowledge that no practical benefit should accrue from it to a suffering humanity? The one credible answer is that they have done nothing be-

cause they have no existence outside of Theosophical imagination. In so-called esoteric systems generally pretense is likely greatly to overlap reality. The distinction of the esoteric wisdom of the Mahatmas is that it seems to be wholly a pretense.

6. The skepticism which Theosophists have applied to spiritualistic phenomena might with entire propriety be applied to reputed apparitions and performances of the Mahatmas. If the spiritualistic mediums, instead of transacting with the real personalities of the dead, are deceived by a miserable astral shell, what guarantee is there that Theosophists, in so far as they actually suppose themselves to have converse with Mahatmas, are not tricked by some wretched counterfeit of the noble personalities imagined to be making visitations? Doubtless the astral shell is as imaginary as anything else; but if a thing of that kind can be thrown up to the Spiritualist, there

is no apparent reason why something equivalent may not be thrown up to the Theosophist. As a source of authentic information John King in no wise needs to be placed below the Mahatmas Koot Hoomi and Morya who superseded him in the recognition of Madame Blavatsky.

The Theosophical basis of authority is a congenial subject for satire. But we have no inclination to resort to that expedient. We content ourselves with the sober induction that the claim respecting the existence and agency of Mahatmas is quite as destitute of foundation as is any fiction that was ever promulgated.

## CHAPTER IX

## COMMENTS ON PROMINENT FEATURES OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SYSTEM

Mrs. Besant has been quoted as saying: "If there are no Masters, then the Theosophical Society is an absurdity." That there are no Masters in her sense we think has been shown with a fair degree of conclusiveness in the preceding chapter. The inference follows then, on the admitted basis, that any further consideration of the claims of Theosophy can fitly be spared. It may not be, however, quite superfluous to indicate in a very brief and summary way some of the weaknesses and incredibilities of the Theosophical system.

One of the most obvious exposures to criticism, on the part of that sys-

tem, lies in its emphatic preference for antique mythology and its wholesale appropriation of the dreams and fancies which have gained record in that domain. The primacy accorded to the moon over the earth is only a more striking instance of this abnormal preference. What but the fact that in antique fancy the moon was made the seat of a deity vying in practical importance with the sun-god, furnished the basis of the Theosophical thesis that the moon is the parent of the earth, and the source in perpetuity of life potencies which work effectually upon the latter? The verdict of science on this subject is thrown contemptuously aside because it conflicts with mythological lore. This may be a maximum instance, but it is not a little typical. To this mythological basis Theosophy adds a scholastic, formulating bent and an intemperate borrowing from Hindu speculations. Now, these speculations, by whatever

degree of subtlety some of them may be characterized, are very much in need of a title to legitimacy. Accordingly, even if we suppose the Theosophical version of them to be correct, we are not able to discover for Theosophy any substantial ground. It rests on mythological fancies and certain adventurous speculations of Oriental minds. Of real verification of its pretentious system it affords not a shred.

As an outcome of its infatuated preference for antique mythology and Oriental speculation, Theosophy gravitates into an unfair treatment of the Bible. As has been noticed, not all of its representatives transgress in equal measure in this matter, but in general they transgress, and the most authoritative of all in the highest degree. It is simply venom, reckless of all truth and sobriety, which Madame Blavatsky shows when she speaks of the Israelitish Scriptures as a relatively

degraded version of the Wisdom-Religion, and declares that the Pentateuch from beginning to end is an apotheosis of phallicism.

A second ground for criticism of Theosophy is its characteristic predilection for the occult and the magical. It was generated in the atmosphere of spiritualistic phenomena. The communications assumed to be derived from the Mahatmas were but a refinement on the messages transmitted through mediums, and fulfilled a like office in gratifying an appetite for the marvelous. The scathing exposure which followed the investigation of the Society for Psychical Research abridged not a little the disposition to exploit the favorite phenomena, but it did not eliminate the predilection for the occult and the magical. Mrs. Besant gave a token that the given predilection was still operative in the trend of her thinking when she justified the continued and general use of

the Latin language in the services of the church on the ground that the Latin words are specially efficacious to set up certain orders of vibrations that are needed in the invisible worlds.[1] To give such prominence to the magical is equivalent, of course, to a relative retrenchment of the primacy of the rational and the moral.

Theosophy is furthermore subject to challenge on the score of contradictions that reach to the substance of teaching. In enumerating conspicuous instances of these we repeat in part what has already been said. It was noticed that Madame Blavatsky in a work assumed to have been written under the supervision of the Mahatmas made man's nature trinal rather than septenary, and pronounced reincarnation a thoroughly exceptional experience, whereas in her later teaching, as in that of her copartners, nothing is more characteristic than the assump-

[1] Esoteric Christianity, p. 337.

tion of man's septenary nature and destination to a prolonged series of incarnations. Another contradiction appears in the exaltation of Theosophy as the effective safeguard against materialism, while yet in its general theory of being it compromises the primacy of spirit over matter, and in its psychology indulges in multiplied representations that vie with the most ultra materialistic propositions that were ever formulated. A further contradiction is seen in the doctrine of a relationless Absolute coupled with the declaration that all that is emanates from the Absolute, it being quite apparent that this declaration puts the Absolute in the relation of source to product. Still another contradiction meets us in the assumption of the invincible unchanging working of impersonal law, taken in its utter contrast with the assumption that no pain, sorrow, or distress can reach those who have entered into Devachan.

Now, the subjects of Devachan are pictured as so loaded down with unpaid obligations, so soiled by the transgressions committed in previous lives, that they must undergo repeated incarnations in order to pay off their score and be purged from their stains. What, then, secures that in Devachan they enjoy unalloyed bliss and are inaccessible to any ground or occasion of disquietude? Plainly, this result presumes upon a suspension of the irreversible irresistible law of retribution, and opens the door to postulating the intervention of the personal agency to which that law is understood not to be amenable. Mrs. Besant virtually confesses as much when she ascribes the marvelous immunity from suffering enjoyed by the denizens of Devachan to "the great spiritual intelligences who superintend human evolution."[2] This is equivalent to saying that personal agency annuls the operation of Karma

[2] The Ancient Wisdom, pp. 137, 138.

or impersonal law for long periods in the career of every individual. Contradictions, like these, touching not superficial but fundamental matters, leave the Theosophical claim to authority in an exceedingly bad plight.

A very serious objection lies against Theosophy in so far as it is a blend of pantheism and polytheism. As has been indicated, it is avowedly and radically pantheistic. The ascription of personality to God it denounces as a belittling anthropomorphism. In this view Madame Blavatsky stigmatizes the God of the monotheistic religions as a blasphemous caricature. Her assumption is that suitable greatness can be attributed to Deity only by making him impersonal. That assumption is not unusual with pantheists. It is quite destitute, however, of substantial basis. The endowments of personality—self-consciousness, intelligence, will, and ethical attributes —are the highest that the human

mind can conceive. To carry these up to an infinite or perfect scale and ascribe them to God is to dignify the thought of him to the utmost. To rob him of them, and to predicate impersonality in the interest of his greatness, is a self-defeating procedure. Inevitably the God despoiled of the highest known categories, instead of being raised to the supra-personal, is thrust down to the plane of the infra-personal.

As respects the polytheistic phase which Theosophists have incorporated into their system, a sufficient account for our purpose has been given in the preceding pages. We only remark here on its singular barrenness. The subordinate gods whom they recognize are distant and ghostly figures wholly destitute of any power of appeal. They may afford some compensation for the awful blank resulting from the assumption of an impersonal Deity with whom a vital communion is out

of question; but that they can satisfy the yearnings of normal human beings in any considerable degree strikes us as quite inconceivable.

In its cosmology and anthropology Theosophy is chargeable with running into a fantastic and gratuitous complexity. No other description befits its assumption that the earth is one in a chain of seven planets the most of which are perpetually invisible, and that the solar system contains seven such chains. In like manner no other description befits the assumption that a planetary orb is the seat of seven races, each of which contains seven subdivisions, and each subdivision seven branch races, through each of which the human subject must pass on his fated pilgrimage. With equal justice the given description applies to the doctrine that man is made up of seven constituents, several of which are subjected to progressive dissipation between incar-

nations, the astral body, for instance, being described as seven concentric rings which are evaporated one after another, until the mind body is reached and consigned to a similar process. The scheme is so extravagantly complex that it is a little difficult to imagine why it was concocted. Very likely the idea of the special significance of the number seven supplied the initial spur to the construction. That it can be accounted as any better than a mere whimsey no one can believe who is not ready to accept the theory of authoritative communications from Mahatmas; and to resort to that basis of belief would be like accepting one incredibility on the ground of a still greater incredibility.

It remains to comment on the Theosophical doctrine of reincarnation. The basis for the doctrine in any form is exceedingly tenuous. The claim of isolated individuals to have some recollection of a former life is

not adapted to carry conviction in face of the substantially universal lack of any such recollection. Instances of infant precocity may be explained by some peculiarity of the brain or of the sense organs or of the two in combination, and a like explanation applies to examples of a high order of genius in the mature. Inequalities in lot may be attributed to the working of a general system of law upon unequal conditions; and in any case the judgment that those who suffer in large measure may be recompensed further on is decidedly more eligible than the harsh verdict that their sufferings are proof positive that they are specially ill-deserving and are only reaping what they have sown in a previous incarnation. Every experienced and reflecting person knows of concrete instances where the application of such a verdict seems nothing better than inhuman and slanderous accusation.

Even if a degree of tolerance could be accorded to the theory of reincarnation, it by no means follows that it could be approved in the mode and measure in which it is taught by Theosophy. Taken in the sense of Madame Blavatsky, Mrs. Besant, Judge, Sinnett, and others, it is an incredible theory. As has been noticed, it assumes that the number of human souls or monads was fixed ages ago, and so collides with the well-grounded induction as to the progressive increase of the population. Again, it presumes upon an economy singularly wasteful and abortive in its very conditions. Since, as a rule, the human subject retains no recollection of previous incarnations, he is robbed of the opportunity to learn by experience, and is sent blindfolded through a succession of rounds that is staggering to the imagination to contemplate. Plainly, to accept the existence of such an economy is to exclude the belief that

wisdom controls the universe. Once more the Theosophical theory involves an element of unfounded optimism. Why should it be assumed that the blindfolded pilgrim will sooner or later reach Nirvana? Unwarned and unguided by a knowledge of his past experience, he is evidently exposed to the liability of adding error to error, and so of increasing with each new incarnation the sum of an adverse karma. If in no case a man continuously travels in the opposite direction from Nirvana, it must be because a gracious personal agency intervenes in his behalf. But to admit this intervention is contradictory to the Theosophic maxim on the remorseless rule of impersonal law.

A degree of credit has sometimes been accorded to Theosophy as fostering a more sympathetic attitude toward the ethnic religions than was formerly maintained by evangelical Christianity. Were substantial proof

afforded of the alleged fact, we should be glad to award to the pretentious cult this much of credit. It is our conviction, however, that the more sympathetic attitude is to be attributed to a broader and more diligent study of the ethnic systems, and is due in very slight degree, if at all, to Theosophy. The most that it can claim with good warrant is to have given forth, at second-hand, some of the truths of the world's leading religions. Unhappily, it has overtopped these truths by colossal errors and fictions.

# PART II

# NEW THOUGHT

# CHAPTER I

## GENERAL SKETCH

While the New Thought movement is not without pronounced characteristics, it has no one oracle or text-book, and is not strictly uniform in tone and content. The period which it has covered is substantially the same as that of Christian Science so called. One of the prominent sources of the latter was also a source of the former. In spite of the denials of Mrs. Eddy, it is historically demonstrated that she was greatly indebted to P. P. Quimby of Portland, Maine, for her religio-medical scheme. The same genial exponent of mental healing was one of the effective antecedents of New Thought. This has been acknowledged in these terms by a leading representative: "The New

Thought movement had as its first great apostle P. P. Quimby, of Portland, Maine, and later Julius A. Dresser, of Boston, and Dr. W. F. Evans. Dr. Dresser taught and practiced mental healing, and wrote but little. Dr. Evans wrote a number of books, the most important being 'Primitive Mind Cure' and 'Esoteric Christianity.' "[1] Though deriving its initial impulse from Quimby, the New Thought movement has probably drawn quite as largely from Ralph Waldo Emerson as from him. Emerson's pages are quite often cited by New Thought writers, and one of them describes him as "the greatest intuitive mind of modern times, who instinctively saw and felt the oneness and interrelation of all things."[2] A third antecedent has sometimes been specified as Hindu thinking. This much at least is clear: some strains in

[1] C. B. Patterson, The Will to Be Well, p. 10.
[2] Henry Wood, Studies in the Thought World, p. 201.

the system under review are analogous to certain phases of Hindu speculation, though it is to be observed that any such formal exaltation of Hindu philosophy and theology as is characteristic of Theosophy does not appear in New Thought literature.

Among conspicuous representatives in recent years Horatio W. Dresser, son of Julius A. Dresser, may be numbered. But it is necessary to add a qualification. In some of his books, especially the latest, he appears quite as much the critic as the advocate of New Thought. Among thoroughgoing advocates we have Charles B. Patterson, Henry Wood, Ralph W. Trine, Charles B. Newcomb, and Abel L. Allen.

A very natural inquiry concerns the attitude of these writers toward the modern cults which have been so ambitiously advertising themselves. As respects Christian Science they confess, that it bears a certain kinship

to their own system. This applies in particular to such conceptions as unity of being and the power of mind over bodily conditions. On the other hand they protest against the despotic concentration of authority characteristic of Christian Science, and take exception, whether with entire consistency or not, to its sweeping negation of matter, sickness, sin, and death. One of their number states the points of comparison as follows: "Christian Science and the New Thought agree that all life is one; that all intelligence is one; that God is all in all. And they disagree on the following points: Christian Science says that the visible world is mortal mind [that is, an illusion]; the New Thought declares the visible universe to be an expression of God's handiwork. Christian Science asserts that sin, sickness, and death have no existence. The New Thought affirms that they have an existence; but that

their existence is only limited and their destruction comes through right thinking and hence right living. Christian Science stands for a great sectarian organization; it stands for slavery of the individual to an institution —at least at present. The New Thought stands for a knowledge of spiritual truth among all people and perfect freedom of the individual in both thought and action, to live out the life God intended him to live. Christian Science stands for a woman and a book; the New Thought movement stands for God manifesting through the soul of man, for eternal laws of creation, and for absolute freedom of the individual to work out his own salvation. Christian Science stands for a treatment of disease that includes both a negative and an affirmative philosophy; the New Thought in its treatment of disease rests on the omnipotence of God as the one and only healing power in the universe, and

is therefore thoroughly and solely affirmative."[3]

Relative to modern Theosophy very little is said by New Thought writers. We notice that one of them appropriates the Theosophical notion of an astral body, and speaks in complimentary terms of the contribution made by Theosophy to an understanding of man's complex nature.[4] Somewhat of a leaning, as will be shown in the next chapter, to the doctrine of reincarnation, so prominent in Theosophy, is discoverable in New Thought literature.

In relation to Spiritualism we find one exponent of New Thought indulging in the appreciative remark that it has afforded indubitable evidence of the continued existence of the human spirit after death.[5] An adverse reference, on the other hand, is contained in the judgment of an-

[3] Patterson, The Will to Be Well, pp. 16, 17.

[4] Newcomb, Principles of Psychic Philosophy, pp. 45–50. Newcomb, All's Right with the World, p. 202.

other writer that mediumship, as involving an undue subjection of one mind to another, is unwholesome.[6]

New Thought has, as we understand, no central organization, and in comparatively few cases has its constituency been gathered into distinct churches. In the attitude assumed toward the historic churches some differences are observable. The most irenic position that has fallen under our notice is that taken by Henry Wood. He says: "A few of those who claim to be exponents of New Thought have been more or less severe in their attacks upon conventional institutions. This spirit has no genuine warrant and it does not represent the New Thought in its purity and breadth. One of its basic principles is to see the best side of everything. Whatever the fault of the formal creeds and doctrines, the ideals of the church are mainly right. It is

[6] Patterson, In the Sunlight of Health, pp. 304, 305.

not to be destroyed or superseded, but spiritualized, purified, and illumined."[7] Passages as kindly in tone as this we judge to be thoroughly exceptional. We find one writer making the bald statement that the church of to-day stands as a barrier to all really advanced religious, philosophic, and scientific thought. "It has become a lifeless organism, a dead body without any real or vital belief in its own teachings."[8] Another writer scores ecclesiasticism—by which he doubtless means the historic Christian Church—as having made for eighteen centuries a vain struggle "based upon a sterile and ascetic philosophy, with its grotesque idea of a supreme good."[9] A third exponent of the New Thought platform censures the theologies of orthodox Protestantism and Catholicism as alike teaching dogmas that find "their only support in the theory

[7] The New Thought Simplified, pp. 133, 134.

[8] Patterson, In the Sunlight of Health, p. 28.

[9] Newcomb, All's Right with the World, p. 215.

and supposition of the separation of God from man." The same writer remarks on the increase of crime and insanity, the depravity, poverty, disease, and wretchedness which everywhere confront us at the opening of the twentieth century, and lays the blame for the dismal situation upon the churches, as having crippled men by their emphasis on human weakness and dependence.[10] Equally disparaging statements could be cited from others.[11] On the whole, the New Thought movement, in every circle where it succeeds in making its influence felt, must foster toward the historic churches an attitude of self-satisfied superiority, not to say of downright aversion and radical disparagement. Its message is virtually, if not formally, "Come out from among them and find your needs met in the new religion which is now starting upon its course."

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[10] Allen, The Message of New Thought, pp. 30, 180ff.

[11] See in particular Trine, The New Alinement of Life.

The expounders of New Thought have manifested very little ambition to deal with the specific problems of biblical criticism. Their method is, in general, to take the Bible as they find it, and to employ such portions of it as are agreeable to their postulates, ignoring or freely contradicting the rest. In their view the Bible is in no preeminent sense a divine revelation. They see no reason why God should not be supposed to have spoken through Emerson and Walt Whitman as truly as through Moses and Paul. Some of them would not hesitate to say that among the sacred books of the world the Bible is the best. Others would prefer to say that it is the best for those peoples over whose religious thought it has been installed, and reserve a place for doubting whether it is best for Buddhists, Hindus, Mohammedans, or Confucianists. Occasionally the judgment crops out that the grounds of choice be-

tween religions are not at all substantial. Thus we read: "The great fundamental principles of all religions are the same. They differ only in their minor details according to various degrees of unfoldment of different people."[12] It is to be noticed, however, that practically New Thought writers pay special tribute to the Christian oracles, the number of their citations from other sacred books being comparatively insignificant.

The conception of Christ characteristic of New Thought is purely humanitarian. To be sure, entire readiness is shown to ascribe to him divinity or deity. But that form of description is not regarded as bespeaking for him any exclusive distinction. He may be characterized as a God-man, but not as the God-man. He may have been somewhat extraordinary in the clarity of his recognition of his oneness with God; in this, however, he simply put

[12] Trine, In Tune with the Infinite, p. 208.

on exhibition the normal man. There is no ground whatever for believing that his personality differed from that of other men.[13] He stands before us as the moral ideal, and fulfills the office of Saviour by example. Even in his miracles he is not apart from us. The so-called miracles were perfectly conformable to law, and indicate the kind of equipment any man might use if he would but enter upon his full inheritance.

In their teaching on the practical conduct of life New Thought writers give expression to many excellent maxims. The several virtues which may be regarded as constitutive of Christ-likeness are strongly and repeatedly emphasized by them. It may be questioned, indeed, whether the point of view from which the emphasis proceeds is always the best, but that a full measure of emphasis is awarded no reader can fail to discover. Love,

[13] Patterson, The Will to Be Well, pp. 81, 82.

charitableness, gentleness, patience, spiritual mindedness, together with the avoidance of envy, jealousy, hatred, and every form of unbrotherly conduct are worthily inculcated. Of course, it is not at all necessary to go to the New Thought literature to meet earnest commendations of the Christ-like virtues. Still, the industry with which these virtues are insisted upon in that literature calls for appreciation. As examples of finely expressed maxims we subjoin the following: "Love is the greatest success in the world." "The ultimate end of life is to love, not to be loved, although that follows as a natural sequence." "Love is the eternal sunshine of life, and to one living in that sunshine there can be no darkness." "Love seeks nothing for itself but the opportunity of expression." "To think no evil is simply to have no ownership of it." "Though the law of nonresistance is looked upon as weak and impracticable, it is divine

and conquers." "Obstinacy is the mark of a weak will. It asserts itself in an emphatic and abnormal way because distrustful of its power." "A man can never be really free who allows himself to become attached to or controlled by his possessions." "The only infidelity is the worship of the golden calf, the reverence for things material rather than things spiritual." "To become an instrument of the Spirit one must eliminate all sarcasm, all unrighteous judgment, all exclusiveness and pettiness, by cultivating the most generous attitude." "Peace is not a stagnant pool; it is a deep-flowing river." "Absolute confidence in the eternal wisdom, love, and power of life is necessary to clear seeing and right doing."[14] Maxims such as these we regard as the largest factor on the credit side of New Thought.

[14] The citations are from Dresser, Patterson, Wood, and Newcomb.

## CHAPTER II

## THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

We do not find that close discrimination of the factors which enter into man's being is specially characteristic of New Thought literature. The writer whose publications are perhaps the most numerous specifies as the components of the individual these three, namely, soul or spirit, mind and body. He defines mind as the expression of soul or spirit, and body as the expression of mind.[1] As respects the grasp of the higher verities, he disparages the ability of the mental factor. "Mind," he says, "can never apprehend God. We can reason and think about spirit, but we can really know it only through spiritual, not

[1] Patterson, The Will to Be Well, p. 16.

mental activity."[2] A formal expression of the trichotomist theory, in this style, is rarely indulged in by New Thought writers. The emphasis with them is not so much upon the mind being the expression of the spirit as upon the body being the expression of the mind. In this latter statement the intention seems to be not so much to give a precise definition of the body as to stress its dependence upon the mind as its formative principle. Just how the body, or the material world in general, is to be construed is left somewhat in the mist. The strong predilection of New Thought for monism, or the assumption of the thoroughgoing oneness of all being, stands in the way of making any positive antithesis, in respect of essence, between matter and mind or spirit. On the other hand, to distinguish between them is found to be exceedingly convenient in various connections. So

[2] Patterson, The Measure of a Man, pp. xxiv, xxv.

the temptation not to elucidate the subject too searchingly is operative. One writer, resorting to a standard found in Theosophical literature, makes the distinction between mind and matter to lie in the rate of vibration. "Matter," he says, "is mind at a slower rate of vibration. Mind is matter at a higher rate. Spirit is infinitely more rapid than either and rules both."[3] How spirit or mind, equally with body, can be a subject for vibration the context does not inform us. The language employed tends not so much to spiritualize matter as to materialize mind and spirit.

A recurring distinction is met with in New Thought literature between the conscious and the subconscious mind. Much account is made of the latter. It is likened to "a great covered reservoir in which is stored up the total aggregation of past mental states and activities."[4] Again it is

[3] Newcomb, Discovery of a Lost Trail, p. 252.
[4] Wood, The New Thought Simplified, p. 43.

described as the hidden partner which acts automatically upon the physical organism, and subtly directs all that class of activities which is called involuntary."[5] More discriminatingly it is defined as a less conscious phase of a single selfhood, too copious to be wholly displayed at one time."[6] How important a factor it is supposed to be among the forces which shape conduct appears in this statement: "Perhaps the largest part of our experience is in the field of the subconscious. A trait or purpose is developed there long before it appears above the horizon of our perception. Long after we have denied a habit or opinion it is apt to linger there and color and actuate our life."[7]

The immense emphasis which New Thought places upon the interconnection of all beings affords a congenial basis for recognizing the fact of telep-

[5] Wood, The New Thought Simplified, p. 44.
[6] Dresser, Human Efficiency, p. 121.
[7] Newcomb, All's Right with the World, p. 149.

athy, or the existence of a power of direct communication between minds placed at a distance from one another. Not all New Thought exponents have concerned themselves with the subject; but some of them have rendered a very confident judgment in favor of the reality of telepathy. Thus C. B. Newcomb remarks: "It is a scientific fact which is being constantly demonstrated through telepathy that mind can consciously converse with mind."[8] "Thought waves appear to spread and widen in their vibrations very much as those of sound and light. They are also intensified in their power by being brought to a focus, as are the sun rays by a burning glass." He adds: "Experiment in this field has been so limited that as yet we have reached only a few definite conclusions. It appears that the conditions which have produced the most satisfactory results at one time are

[8] Principles of Psychic Philosophy, p. 194.

by no means certain to produce the same results at another."[9] A. B. Olston pronounces with like decision for the fact of telepathy, and cites many instances in confirmation. In his view it is in particular the subconscious, or, as he names it, the subjective mind, that is operative in this order of communication. Accordingly, he defines telepathy as "the normal communication between subjective minds, independent of the five objective senses."[10]

Not less than telepathy the doctrine of reincarnation, or repeated incarnations, has a congenial basis in points of view characteristic of New Thought. It alleviates the difficulty which apart from it would attach to the thesis, that all physical ills have their origin in mental errancy or misdirected thought. While not enumerated in the list of acknowledged tenets, it

[9] All's Right with the World, p. 231.
[10] Olston, Mind Power, p. 57.

crops out here and there, as appears in the following sentences: "This little earth life is not the beginning nor the end of man's destiny."[11] "Children in this life without doubt are being rewarded or punished for things done or left undone in a past life."[12] "The mills of the gods grind so slowly that the grist of to-day may have been put into the hopper in some incarnation far remote, but doubtless by the man's own hands, for it is only our own grist that comes to us through the mill of life."[13] "Why," asks the writer of the last sentence, "should the philosophy of reembodiment which has always been held by the larger part of the world, including its most distinguished minds, be so distasteful to a few who have not until recently been made familiar with its teachings?"[14] On the other hand, H. W. Dresser rates

[11] Patterson, Dominion and Power, p. 139.
[12] Patterson, In the Sunlight of Health, pp. 146, 147.
[13] Newcomb, Discovery of a Lost Trail, pp. 110, 111.
[14] Newcomb, Discovery of a Lost Trail, p. 254.

the doctrine of reincarnation as only an hypothesis, and confesses that he has found but little evidence in its favor.[15]

It is characteristic of the literature with which we are dealing to emphasize profoundly the power of thought among the elements of man's equipment. Its virtue is accounted practically unlimited. Illustrative statements naturally will be in special demand when we come to the healing art of New Thought; but a few samples of the ever-recurring strain may be admitted at this point. "Thought," we read, "is not only the greatest but the only real power in the universe."[16] "Will is not, as so often thought, a force in itself; will is the directing power. Thought is the force."[17] In proportion as a man opens himself to the divine influx he takes on the God-powers. "And if the God-powers are without limit, does it not then

[15] Dresser, The Search of a Soul, pp. 175, 176.
[16] Wood, Studies in the Thought World, p. 235.
[17] Trine, What All the World's A-Seeking, p. 173.

follow that the only limitations man has are the limitations he sets himself by virtue of not knowing himself?"[18] "The art of living is the art of thinking, for life has no values except as thought molds them. . . . Right thought means right living."[19] "The personal body is a physical copy of the individual mind, and in some part of its construction expresses its every thought."[20] "The body is what the mind makes it."[21] "With scientific accuracy, one can make himself what he will by thinking his thoughts into the right form, and continuing the process until they solidify and take outward correspondence."[22] "It is literally true that thought can be materialized through trained and powerful concentration."[23] "Thoughts are living entities."[24]

[18] Trine, In Tune with the Infinite, p. 15.
[19] Allen, The Message of New Thought, pp. 261, 265.
[20] Whipple, Mental Healing, p. 137.
[21] Patterson, What Is New Thought? p. 32.
[22] Wood, The New Thought Simplified, p. 49.
[23] Newcomb, Principles of Psychic Philosophy, p. 187.
[24] Newcomb, All's Right with the World, p. 107.

## CHAPTER III

## THE CONCEPTION OF GOD AND OF MAN'S RELATION TO HIM

The ruling conception of God in New Thought is that of the Universal Life. He is also called the Universal Love and the Universal Intelligence. On the question whether personality is to be ascribed to him, most of the writers, if they do not enter a denial, show little interest to record an affirmation. H. W. Dresser takes a somewhat exceptional course in raising safeguards against a pantheistic obscuration of divine personality. He is at pains to assert that God does not exhaust himself in his world activity, that he is in a sense transcendent and as transcendent essentially unchangeable; that the sons of God, while not

separated from him, do not become God, any more than a human father absorbs his child.[1] Moreover, he advises against thinking of the Divine Presence as impersonal,[2] and declares, "No man was ever a pantheist in practical life."[3] On the other hand, he greatly emphasizes the intimacy of connection between God and the world. He speaks of the infinite as "made perfect through the finite."[4] He ascribes eternity to the world, and adds, "If a world of some sort has always existed, there is no need of a theory of final causes. Teleology gives place to description. The constitution of the world is what it is because God is what he is."[5] In another connection he makes room for teleology to the extent of speaking of the cosmos as revealing purpose. He says, however, "The purpose of God is the eternal

[1] Man and the Divine Order, pp. 408, 410, 411.
[2] A Message to the Well, p. 38.
[3] Man and the Divine Order, p. 164.
[4] In Search of a Soul, p. 215.
[5] Man and the Divine Order, pp. 399, 401.

expression of the being of God"[6]—a form of statement which leaves us still to inquire whether God has an option in respect of the ends which he pursues.

The reference of other New Thought advocates to the personality of God is distinctly more negative and compromising in tone. One of them writes: "We might say that God is all the personality in the universe and much more than personality. God is infinite love, limitless and supreme; but personality is limited."[7] Another remarks: "God is not less but incomparably more than personal. Infinite Mind, Love, and Law are terms which doubtless carry to the average mind a more correct concept of the Supreme Being than personality."[8] A third exponent of New Thought is not at all disturbed by the charge of pantheism, and contents himself with asking

[6] The Philosophy of the Spirit, pp. 113, 115.
[7] Patterson, The Measure of a Man, pp. 142, 143.
[8] Wood, Studies in the Thought World, p. 183.

the question, "Is not a spiritual pantheism more desirable than an absentee God?"[9]

In construing man's relation to God New Thought writers are not careful to avoid the appearance of a pantheistic blend of the human and the divine. Even H. W. Dresser, in one of his books, speaks of the higher self in man as an "individuation of God,"[10] and with other writers it is a well-established habit to designate man as a part of God. The following are characteristic statements: "All minds are substantially parts of one omnipresent mind, which is the basis of all manifestation."[11] "There is no difference between the great universal Soul and the individual soul, other than this one thought of differentiation or individualization."[12] "God is all; and, if all, then each individual, you

[9] Allen, The Message of New Thought, p. 59.
[10] In Search of a Soul, p. 118.
[11] Wood, Studies in the Thought World, p. 189.
[12] Patterson, The Will to Be Well, p. 117.

and I, must be a vital part of that all, since there can be nothing separate from it; and if a part, then the same in nature, in characteristics—the same as a tumbler of water taken from the ocean is, in nature, in qualities, in characteristics, identical with that ocean, its source. God, then, is the infinite Spirit of which each one is a part in the form of an individualized spirit."[13]

Proceeding from this point of view, exponents of New Thought are very free to ascribe divinity to man. Instances occur in which the divine name is given him, divine functions are predicated of him and his identity with God is as good as affirmed. The reader is told, "There is no separation between your soul and the soul of the universe. . . . In the deepest sense you are the great universal soul."[14] "Man is the personal

[13] Trine, What All the World's A-Seeking, p. 137.
[14] Patterson, The Measure of a Man, p. 123.

expression of the one creative Spirit; so that purposeful evolution is a multiplying of self-conscious, divine personalities."[15] "Divine incarnations must be multiplied and perfected until God shall find adequate expression in humanity."[16] "Man is God incarnate."[17] "Cast thyself into the will of God and thou shalt become as God. For thou art God if thy will be the divine will."[18] "God is Love. God is Law. We are Law. God and Love and Law are One. We are Love. We are One. We are God."[19] "We have latent within us such powers over matter, as we have but just begun to dream. In the scheme of creation we shall ourselves rank as creators, with ability to disintegrate and reintegrate at will such forms as we shall choose to bring into visible exist-

[15] Wood, Studies in the Thought World, p. 28.

[16] Ibid., p. 226.

[17] Trine, What All the World's A-Seeking, p. 122.

[18] Newcomb, Principles of Psychic Philosophy, p. 139.

[19] Rosicrucian axiom cited by Newcomb, Principles of Psychic Philosophy, p. 181.

ence."[20] "We are already warranted in boldly claiming that we have no limitations except those we have placed upon ourselves."[21]

These lofty descriptions are meant to be applied not to the exceptional man, but to every man; not, indeed, in all their specifications to the present estate of every man, but to the ultimate estate. New Thought has no tolerance for the supposition that any human being can fail of the ideal consummation. It repudiates the notion of lost souls.[22] "Man," we are informed, "is ever pressing steadfastly toward life, toward a knowledge of truth. All his sins and all his mistakes, when seen and understood in their right relation, have only been stepping-stones to greater knowledge, to truer understanding."[23] "All pass ultimately over the same road in

[20] Newcomb, Discovery of a Lost Trail, p. 255.
[21] Newcomb, Principles of Psychic Philosophy, p. 134.
[22] Dresser, Man and the Divine Order, pp. 141, 385.
[23] Patterson, What Is New Thought? p. 45.

general, some more rapidly, some more slowly. The ultimate destiny of all is the higher life, the finding of the higher self, and to this we are either led or pushed."[24]

The inclusion of man in God, the making him a veritable part of Deity, prepares a difficult situation for the champions of New Thought when they address themselves to the question of the reality of sin, sickness, suffering, and death. It is somewhat enigmatic that a veritable part of the perfect and Holy One should be a subject for any form of evil, and especially of moral evil.

In dealing with this difficulty New Thought expositors have been pushed into a kind of apology for evil, moral delinquency included. They are led to define it as a means to something higher than itself, or as purely negative, or as a lack of development, or as a partial expression of life, or as a

[24] Trine, What All the World's A-Seeking, p. 143.

product of ignorance. Their writings abound in such sentences as these: "The followers of the new doctrine believe that ultimately only the good exists, all seeming wrong being a means to an end higher than itself."[25] "When fully interpreted evil ceases to be evil, and becomes educational experience."[26] "Just as darkness is the absence of the light of the sun, so evil is the absence of the knowledge of the law of God."[27] "What we have called evil proves to be only a negative condition—a transition state, an imperfect ripening."[28] "Good and evil are merely comparative terms—labels, one might say, for different degrees of attainment."[29] "All wrong mental conditions—malice, hatred, envy, pride, jealousy, sensuality, and kindred emotions—are indications

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[25] Dresser, In Search of a Soul, pp. 225, 226.
[26] Wood, The New Thought Simplified, p. 89.
[27] Patterson, Dominion and Power, p. 30.
[28] Newcomb, Principles of Psychic Philosophy, p. 10.
[29] Patterson, The Measure of a Man, p. 40.

of a lack of development."[30] "Evil represents the undeveloped or partial expression of life."[31] "Selfishness is at the root of all error, sin, and crime, and ignorance is at the basis of all selfishness."[32]

Occasionally the felt demand to make as little as possible of evil drives the apologist into an apparent denial of its existence. We have noticed one writer in particular whose denials on this theme, taken in their verbal form, are quite as prominent as his affirmations, and to discover the method of the reconciliation of the two orders of statements is rather taxing. On the one hand, he criticizes Christian Science for its negations, and declares, "If you say, in good faith, that there is no sin, sickness, or disease, you have simply succeeded in hypnotizing yourself into an erroneous belief."[33] On the other hand, he lays

[30] Patterson, The Will to Be Well, p. 15.
[31] Patterson, Dominion and Power, p. 150.
[32] Trine, In Tune with the Infinite, p. 89.
[33] Patterson, The Will to Be Well, p. 123.

down propositions that might have been penned by Mary Baker G. Eddy. What statements in Science and Health are more radically negative than the following?—"There never was any reality in sin, disease, or death."[34] "Nothing is evil in and of itself. Evil is the result of the false imaginings we indulge in."[35] "The greatest lesson man has yet to learn is that all things are good; that evil is no thing; that it seems to be, but in reality is not."[36] "In reality there is neither sin, sickness, nor death. God's law can neither be broken nor set aside."[37] Such language we regard as a striking testimony to the exigency which is thrust upon New Thought by its fundamental doctrine that man is a veritable part of God. Starting from such a premise, how can anyone who has any respect for God, restrain

[34] Patterson, In the Sunlight of Health, p. 152.
[35] Ibid., p. 254.
[36] Ibid., p. 433.
[37] Dominion and Power, p. 35.

his desire to minify or even to abrogate the fact of sin? Most New Thought writers do not proceed to the latter extreme, but obviously their leading postulates bring a pressure to bear upon them in that direction.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE THERAPEUTIC SCHEME

The very tenuous hold upon reality which is ascribed to evil and the limitless efficacy which is assigned to thought serve as the foundation of the therapeutic scheme which is so prominent a factor in New Thought. In its diagnosis of bodily ills they are referred to just one source. That source is mental errancy, perverse or misdirected thought and the abnormal feeling which it engenders. "Mental healing," we are told by one writer, "has fully demonstrated that the imaging faculty of man is responsible for all the ills from which he suffers. One disease is no more imaginary than another. . . . Our thoughts are first ideated, then expressed outwardly. The expression must corre-

spond to the inner thought. If this is inflamed, inflammation will make itself felt in the body. . . . The many inflammatory diseases that come from poor circulation and poisoned blood are simply expressions of inflamed mental conditions."[1] In an equivalent strain another writer assures us: "All disease is in the emotional life. It is a disturbance of the circulation which proceeds from thought."[2] "The fevers and distempers of the body only externalize those of the mind."[3] The same writer does not shun to declare that "death in any form is suicide,"[4] and another writer makes a statement scarcely less arresting when he informs us that "rags, tatters, and dust are always in the mind before being on the body."[5]

Among mental aberrations fear is specially emphasized as a prolific source of diseases. "All disease," it

[1] Patterson, In the Sunlight of Health, pp. 207, 233.
[2] Newcomb, Principles of Psychic Philosophy, p. 167.
[3] All's Right With the World, p. 237.
[4] Ibid., p. 187.
[5] Trine, In Tune with the Infinite, p. 33.

is affirmed, "results from fear."[6] In answer to the objection that children are not responsible thinkers, the plea is made that "they are little sensitive mirrors, in which surrounding thoughts and conditions are reflected and duplicated."[7]

As all bodily ills flow from erring mental activities, so health is the product of normal thinking; and as our thinking is subject to our direction, there is no real need to be afflicted with any sort of physical ailment. "The mind," so run the New Thought maxims, "can make the body whole and strong, or the mind can make it weak or diseased; the result is purely a question of mental poise or lack of it."[8] "We make our bodies what we will to make them when we observe the laws of life. We may realize this so thoroughly that we can have our heaven here

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[6] Newcomb, Principles of Psychic Philosophy, p. 130.
[7] Wood, Studies in the New Thought World, p. 131.
[8] Patterson, What Is New Thought? p. 74.

on earth."[9] "No matter what ancestral trait has been reproduced, no matter what taint in the blood has shown itself anew, it can be wholly overcome in any individual life. . . . Man is his own creator and can dominate what his mind has expressed."[10]

In the mental dealing with disease two expedients are available, that of resolute affirmation of health, and that of serene acquiescence in the ailment. We do not discover that in the therapeutics of New Thought the two are carefully distinguished. The writer last cited proffers this advice: "Let us make friends with our adversities. Nothing else will so quickly disarm their power and neutralize their sting."[11] This is the method to employ against nervous prostration. "Let us begin by ceasing to oppose—ceasing to fight our troubles, declaring

[9] Patterson, The Will to Be Well, p. 51.
[10] Newcomb, Discovery of a Lost Trail, p. 16.
[11] Ibid., p. 187.

their nonentity, while we give ear to the thought of the eternal man—our own true self."[12]

Their zeal for mental healing makes the advocates of New Thought exceedingly sparing of appreciative reference to the ordinary type of medical science. They commonly mention it only for criticism. We notice, however, that one of them makes these significant concessions: "Materia medica fits the present stage of man's development. . . . In the category of acute, contagious, and rapid disorders, the physician is, and for some time to come will be, indispensable."[13] "Until the subjective quarantine has been intelligently erected that which is objective cannot be entirely disregarded."[14]

In many of the citations which have been given the note of optimism has been very conspicuous. Nothing in fact is more striking in the New

[12] Newcomb, Discovery of a Lost Trail, p. 189.
[13] Wood, New Thought Simplified, pp. 158, 160.
[14] Wood, Studies in the Thought World, p. 246.

Thought system than its unlimited optimism. It abolishes—in theory—every shadow, and leaves not one regret to be entertained by any human being. The literature of the world may safely be challenged, we think, to outbid such optimistic strains as the following: "All things work together for good whether we call them by the name of good or evil."[15] The law of betterment runs through everything. "There is not a pin-point of personal experience we can discover that has ever been outside its action."[16] "Christ could not have suffered for others, knowing the grandeur of their destiny and that every moment of existence all things work together for good to everyone."[17] "True life is unutterable sweetness, in which all the shadows of our yesterdays are woven into the soft tints of the morning sunshine."[18]

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[15] Patterson, Dominion and Power, p. 54.
[16] Newcomb, Principles of Psychic Philosophy, p. 30.
[17] Newcomb, All's Right with the World, p. 56.
[18] Newcomb, Discovery of a Lost Trail, p. 26.

"The world is a garden of delights, a veritable Eden to those who are not blind and deaf."[19] "The advent of the new man, Nietzsche's super-man, is near at hand, the man who shall enter into a universal, a cosmic consciousness, and look out on all life as a ruler, a king having dominion and power over all things, holding in his own hands the keys of life."[20] "It may well be that the next hundred years of human progress will show man as victor over disease and pain, show him master of his own physical organism. Crime and punishment for crime will be things of the past, and poverty should be unknown."[21]

[19] Newcomb, All's Right with the World, p. 32.
[20] Patterson, What Is New Thought? pp. 144, 145.
[21] Patterson, In the Sunlight of Health, p. 62.

## CHAPTER V

## SOME GROUNDS OF CRITICISM

Much less space will be required to pass upon the merits of New Thought than has been given to an exposition of its teachings. Here we are very far from accepting the judgment of its advocates. In the first place, we do not find that it is at all distinguished by close and industrious reasoning. On the contrary, its method is superficial, oracular, conclusive only to the one who is easily overawed by assertion or is already at the start more than ready to believe. It assumes that recent thinking has reached a list of indubitable inductions and that these are identical with its own premises. Substantial, intelligible proofs of these premises are nowhere discoverable in its literature.

Not one of its writers impresses us as specially well read in philosophy, except H. W. Dresser, and his philosophical investigation evidently tended to precipitate graduation from characteristic tenets of the New Thought fraternity.[1]

Among the sweeping but unfounded assumptions of New Thought none takes precedence of that which defines the nature of God and of man's relation to him. If not chargeable as a whole with canceling the personality of God, it is either feeble and halting in its affirmation of personality, or, going a step further, exposes it to doubt. Some of its representatives, to save themselves from the appearance of relegating God to the impersonal range, speak of him as superpersonal. But this expedient accomplishes

[1] Professor J. B. Anderson in his trenchant book entitled New Thought, Its Lights and Shadows, notices in particular the lack of philosophical competency shown by New Thought writers, in that their system is a self-contradictory blend of monism and pluralism.

nothing worth while. As was indicated in the criticism of Theosophy, the super-personal is an empty phrase. A God who cannot be described as personal, in other words, as possessed of self-consciousness and will, lacks the highest attributes of which we have any conception, and for all practical purposes is lowered to the impersonal plane. The appeal to the notion, or, rather, to the word, "super-personal," is a poor shift, and whoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

A motive for skimping the personality of God plainly arises from the fundamental postulate on the oneness of life, the affirmation that God is the Universal Life in which men are included as integral parts. The difficulty of construing this proposition is not slight. In the first place, the notion of distinguishable parts in God has a queer look. That notion belongs to the domain of aggregates or masses. A physical entity made up

of a great number of molecules may conceivably be distinguished into parts, so many molecules being assigned to one division, and so many to another. But what can be meant by a part of spirit, a part of the infinite Spirit, with which God is identified. Is God a sum of parts, an aggregate? He might be if he were simply a very extensive physical entity, though even in that case there would be occasion to demand a unitary power above him to coordinate the parts; but being Spirit, he cannot be a sum of parts. Intelligence, will, and moral perfections cannot be cut into sections, or dished up with a cup as may be done with the water of the sea. To make men parts of God amounts to a denial that the proper character of spirituality belongs either to God or men.

Furthermore, on the basis of that representation a question properly arises as to the age of men. If they are not to be accounted eternal, then

God must have been subject to increase by their addition, and the contingent finds place in him. But, on the other hand, where can any warrant be found for rating men as eternal? Their plain characteristics as mutable and changing, beginning with an infinitesimal mental capital and advancing by the path of hard experience, belies the supposition; revelation does not countenance it, and scientific investigation discovers for it no scrap of evidence. In short, this partitive conception of God rejects rational interpretation. How greatly preferable is the long-standing conception of Christian philosophy, that man is rather a product than a part of God, a product of the divine efficiency which so operates to initiate and to sustain his being as to constitute him an agent as well as a product.

The moral implications of the New Thought postulate are as troublesome as the metaphysical. How does it

agree with the perfect wisdom of God that parts of him should run into the abject folly in which not a few men indulge? How does it harmonize with his spotless holiness that parts of him should be stained with such abominable wickedness as men often have placed to their account? How unite in one Being, and a Being figured as the supreme ideal, these flagrant contradictions? The task is one that lies close to despair. New Thought writers confess as much when they tone down, curtail, and at the extreme even abolish the notion of sin. Herein they play a role that is at once anti-biblical, anti-ethical, and anti-religious. The Bible profoundly emphasizes the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and from beginning to end seeks to foster a vital sense of its demerit. The safeguarding of ethical interests requires that the antithesis, the veritable gulf between righteousness and unrighteousness, should be vividly apprehended.

Religion is made farcical where no place is left for compunction over affronts to the laws of God. It is, of course, true that a man may dwell morbidly on his sins; but it is equally true that he may morbidly, yea absurdly, palliate or ignore his sins. And New Thought, it strikes us, virtually invites to this soul-scathing indifference and frivolity. When it asserts that every pin-point of experience works for betterment, that all things work together for good to everybody, it leaves the sinner with no logical ground for repentance. There is no reason why he should cherish a regret for anything. A penitent confession becomes a kind of burlesque performance. On the New Thought basis the publican made a fool of himself when he prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" He ought rather to have said: "O Lord, I gladly recognize that I am a divine being. I am as good as you are. I am God

incarnate." As for the Pharisee, he was perfectly right in so far as he took a high view of himself. His mistake was that he did not clearly recognize his own essential divinity, and the equal divinity of all men. In neither the publican nor the Pharisee could a broken and contrite spirit properly be required, and Paul's exhortation not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think belongs to an old-fashioned and obsolete regime. As divine beings we are bound in deference to our actual status to eschew every appearance of self-abasement. New Thought writers would not, of course, state the matter in just this form, but many of their sayings logically prepare for this outcome, and it is noticeable that one might traverse their books from beginning to end without coming across a sentence designed to commend the obligation to repentance or confession.

In relation to its healing art New

Thought can claim the merit of powerfully inculcating the efficacy of a serene temper. Much that is urged on this score can cordially be recognized in sane medical practice. But no respect is paid to normal limits. Assertions of the most extravagant kind abound. The exclusive virtue assigned to thought is thoroughly one-sided. As H. W. Dresser has remarked: "Life is in truth partly an affair of thought, but not chiefly so. Man is in part what thought has made him, but far more the result of will. It is, indeed, important to make right affirmations, but of far more consequence to do something than to 'hold the thought.'"[2] The psychology of New Thought at this point is closely akin to that of Christian Science. Both the one and the other relatively ignore the will and lay the whole stress on certain lines of thinking. Evidently, this point of

[2] A Message to the Well, p. 77.

view involves a certain affinity with dogmatism, as placing correct thinking at a premium. New Thought writers, it is true, are much given to berating dogmas. But they are thinking of the dogmas of the church which come into conflict with their own views; and the curious feature in the case is that they cannot see that they themselves are among ultra dogmatists in the spirit in which they hold and champion their cherished views.

The assertion of the limitless power of thought, or, in other terms, of the mind, over the body is simply an extravagant dogma. It is an assumption for which no suitable proof can be afforded. Whatever competency may belong to mind in another range, minds of a finite order, such as we possess, have no complete sovereignty over the body. The beauty and normality of the saintly soul do not in the actual dispensation guarantee even an average state of health. The saint,

in point of physical condition, may be utterly distanced by the athletic outlaw who makes a living by inhuman violence. Doubtless a revolution in mental tone may be attended by considerable physical results. The very extravagance of the New Thought tenet on the power of mind over body may help to make it a potent medicine to a specially conditioned subject. But a virtue which pertains to a fiction because of its extravagance cannot authenticate the fiction or turn it into a truth. A wide induction is certain to show up the fiction as outlawed by a vast preponderance of facts.

Even should the assumption of New Thought on the power of mind to shape bodily conditions be substantially conceded, a problem for the healing art would still remain. To get the ideal result the mind would need to be normally directed. And that is an end most difficult to achieve. The body reacts upon the mind. The

environment works as a powerful factor. The subconscious mind, as New Thought teaches, may be a great storehouse of aberrant tendencies. With so many currents impinging upon conscious mind and tending to bias thinking, the probability of imperfect control is simply enormous. The patient may be told that his one care should be to keep the mind in the right channel of thought. But that is a most trying task, and the serious attempting of it may awaken anxieties. It is possible to get anxious over the fulfillment of the demand not to be in the least degree anxious. The liability to this experience has been illustrated in verse as follows:

> I joined the new Don't Worry Club,
> And now I hold my breath:
> I am so scared for fear I'll worry
> That I'm worried most to death.

A scheme more workable in the great majority of cases than that of New Thought, and decidedly more salutary,

is the one which teaches the patient that the power of the mind over the body, though appreciable, is not unlimited or unconditional, that physical good is subordinate to higher ends, and that the wise thing to do is to cast oneself upon eternal Wisdom and Love, and to pray for ability to receive with calmness and sweetness of temper the appointed result.

An occasion for some degree of criticism of New Thought is furnished by the prominence which it gives to the therapeutic value of virtuous tempers. It may be legitimate enough to place considerable emphasis on this point of view. Virtuous tempers, Christlike dispositions, undoubtedly are favorable to the health of their possessor. But they have a value that cannot properly be measured on a therapeutic scale. They are the glory of the human spirit, the content of spiritual excellence, and the obligation to cultivate them would be

overwhelming even if their relation to bodily weal were perfectly indifferent. We are glad that the advocates of New Thought so strongly inculcate them. We cannot, however, escape the feeling that the prominence which is given to their connection with physical health tends to place them below the plane of their proper dignity and worth. Things that are central may affect the superficies; but, if they are too constantly associated with the superficies, their centrality ceases to be duly rated.

Reference was made to the optimism characteristic of New Thought. The extreme to which it runs makes it just as dubious in tendency as the extravagant pessimism which has been taught in recent times. Moral strenuousness certainly cannot be promoted by a system which loudly proclaims that there is no danger ahead, that all experience serves as a stepping-stone to better things, and that every

man is absolutely sure of unalloyed happiness. A soporific of this kind is absurdly out of place. The somber side of life and destiny may indeed deserve the lesser attention, but to ignore it is to substitute roseate misleading dreams for realities.

While, therefore, it is true that the New Thought movement has given worthy expression to not a few valuable truths, we are none the less forced to conclude that it has enthroned dogmas which are false and mischievous in tendency. The good which New Thought inculcates can be found in our common Christianity. There is no serious occasion, therefore, to turn to its literature for any substantial furnishing.

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